

Chapter II Literature Review

Introduction

Recently anthropologists have focused their attention on fundamental assumptions which underline specific cultural beliefs and practices. These assumptions or world views have a profound effect on cultural development and identity. One geographic area where anthropologists have always had an interest are the islands of Melanesia. This literature review will attempt to summarize some of the anthropological and sociological studies along with a sprinkling of some theological research which has been done in this part of the world.

Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold I have told you in advance (Matthew 24:23-24).

Christ's advanced warning of the plethora of messianic movements that would emerge in the then eschatological future reads like the latest review in an anthropological journal. The world has been inundated by sects, cults, isms and schisms too numerous to recite. Missionary anthropologist Gottfried Oosterwal observed that, "hardly a week passes where somewhere

another prophet arises whose message of a soon coming "messiah" and the imminent destruction of the present world becomes the basis of a new messianic movement or religious awakening", (Oosterwal 1973, 7). Oosterwal's research of modern messianic movements in the last two or three decennia compiles an impressive list of thousands of movements with millions of followers.

Christian theologians and apologists have copious bibliographies relating to the major religions such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc., yet the schisms and isms of these major religions have received comparatively little attention. *Kebatinan*, which is an animistic form of Islam found in Indonesia, is rarely mentioned or dealt with by Christian theologians. However, the Muhammadiyah or Islamic missionary movement estimates that 75% of Muslims in this, the largest Muslim nation in the world, are followers of this animistic form of Islam (Asia Week May 4, 1986). The *Watawat ng' Lahi* movement in the Philippines is another example of widespread cultic activity which has captured the hearts of the people in the Philippines yet not seriously dealt with theologically. This cult anticipates the return of Jose Rizal who will descend on Mt. Makili and Mt. Banahaw to restore the Filipino

people to their rightful place among the nations of the world.

Cargo cults also fall into the category of the "less researched". There is no question by theologians and anthropologists alike that there is a religious aspect to the messianic movements known as cargo cults (Trompf 1991, Lawrence 1964). The contextualized religion of choice which is at least the facade of these cargo movements in Melanesia is Christianity. The preponderance of research done about this phenomenon *sui generis*, as Lawrence called it, falls squarely in the fields of anthropology and sociology. This is not necessarily because it is strictly an anthropological or sociological phenomenon but rather it seems few theologians have concerned themselves with these issues on a theological or missiological level.

There are some notable exceptions which represent seminal thinking in the theology of the cargo cults and other messianic movements in Melanesia, for example, the works of John Strelan, Gottfried Oosterwal and Friedrich Steinbauer (1978, 1967 & 1973, 1979). The majority, however, have been content to focus on the conclusions of anthropology and sociology. Eugene Nida wrote that these movements are the "grim evidence of a dying culture" and "the last agonies of a

disintegrating society which makes one final attempt to rally the past to solve the problem of the future" (Nida 1954, 177). Louis Luzbetak concurred by saying the cargo cults are, "traceable to frustration" and "generally a reaction against suppression" (Luzbetak 1963, 249). This does not suggest that Nida or Luzbetak are wrong in reaching anthropological and sociological conclusions concerning cargo cults. They are certainly not alone in doing so, but they have relied on the anthropological work of Ralph Linton and Anthony Wallace in forming their opinions (1943, 1956). The point is that there are also foundational religious reasons why cargo cults exist apart from culture clash, deprivation, oppression, colonialism, injustice and stress, which typify the anthropological and sociological responses to the cargoist mentality. Theology has an important role to play in understanding the cargoist, especially in relationship to the contextualization of the Christian message.

There are several overlays which will form the foundation of understanding messianic movements in general and specifically the cargo cults. Terminology and causation or interpretation are the issues relating to this foundation. The irony of the vast divergence of opinion regarding these issues is found in the fact

that the mythological base and progression of each movement has little variance. "When one reads a description of a new cult one always has the impression he has read it all before. A good description of one of the cults fits almost exactly any other even though it has occurred hundreds of miles away" (Oosterwal 1967, 470). There is a commonality of practice and yet a divergence of views. Perhaps the problem lies in the fact that no active participant in any cargo cult has ever bothered to analyze his own behavior and belief. This has been left up to the outside foreign (and primarily Western) cultural observer. It needs to be remembered that most of the literature available on religious movements in primal societies comes from a Western perspective.

Terminology of the Cargo Cults

The term *cargo cult* is one of many terms used to describe these Melanesian religious movements. Kamma listed forty-eight separate terms used in describing these movements which all characterize the same activity. In essence this is very typical of the movements themselves which have a common religious theme yet are different in their manifestations. Kamma

has twelve categories in which he has placed his forty-eight references:

1. *General Native:*

nativistic movements

2. *Ritual:*

nativistic cults, messianic cult, new cults, modern cults, religious movements

3. *Economic:*

cargo cults, the cult of the secrets of wealth

4. *Eschatological:*

messianic expectations, messiah movements, messiah expectations, adventism, messianism, messianic movements, millennialism

5. *Revivalistic:*

religious revivalism, religious reversion, revived paganism

6. *Individualistic:*

prophets, prophetism, prophetship, saviors, certain primitive steps towards prophetship

7. *Syncretistic:*

syncretistic cults, mongrel religion, semi-heathen heretic religion, new pagan movements

8. *Sectarian:*

fanaticism, religious fanaticism, Christian fanatics, sects

9. *Acculturative:*

the "europeanization" of the primitives,
 contra-acculturative movements

10. *New:*

new superstitions, new cults, new religions,
 new religious movements

11. *Reactionary and Political:*

native religious outbreaks, outbreaks of
 a quasi-religious nature, native reaction
 to white rule, the forerunners of nationalism

12. *Psychopathic:*

queer religious hysteria, fanaticism,
 religious delusions, religious mania, the
 Great Dream after the war, Vailala Madness
 (Kamma 1972, 231-232)

What the movements are called reflects a great deal on the background of the researcher and the point that is trying to be made through the research. The diversity seen in the terms used to describe these movements is evidence of the emic and etic problems of making ethnographic observations. Anthony Wallace described these movements as "revitalization movements" in which there is a deliberate effort on the part of the indigenous people to construct a more satisfying society (Wallace 1956, 268). Peter Lawrence's observations of cargo cult movements in the southern Madang District of Papua New Guinea illustrate the use of another term to describe these movements. Lawrence called the movements, "a rudimentary form of

revolutionary nationalism" (Lawrence 1964, 222). The questions that he asked at the beginning of his study reflect why he saw these movements as reactionary and political. The goals of his research were to ask and answer these questions: Why did the natives of the southern Madang District want cargo? Why did they believe they could get it largely by means of ritual? And what is the political significance of their attempt to do so?

For Weston La Barre the significance of these movements lies in the element of crisis which he believed was the causal factor. In such cases La Barre is looking for the underlying crisis which gave rise to the cult. Although La Barre's research is primarily among the Ghost Dances of Indians in North America, he does make comparisons with the cargo cults in Melanesia, and in doing so is looking for the significant crisis (La Barre 1972).

It is the "*significance*" question which drives for the conclusions. A theologian would ask: What is the theological significance of the cargo cults? An anthropologist would seek to find the anthropological significance of the cults. A social scientist would look for issues relating to societal change which occurs among cargo cultists. And so the list goes on,

creating what Kamma called a superficiality which makes it "impossible to formulate a general definition for these movements" (Kamma 1972, 231).

Despite Kamma's frustration, definitions have been made. The definitions are not multiform lines of explanation, nor could they be, yet all contribute to the base of understanding the movements. There simply is not a singular way to describe the multi-faceted, incomprehensibly complex nature of these kinds of movements. What appears to have happened with regard to research about the cargo cults is that the emphasis is put on the adventitious aspects of the movements specifically related to a particular field of study. This of course would explain the great variety of terminology used in describing them.

It is also quite possible that other researchers felt the way this researcher did when first encountering a cargo cult movement. The movement and beliefs appeared to be an anomaly, something so unusual that they defied immediate classification. However this may in fact be the case, cargo cults do not fit into any particular anthropological or sociological category or theological category but are indeed *sui generis*. It appears that the movements are more than just socio-political aspirations or economically

driven. They shape and encompass a believer's whole life, including his interests, ambitions, his religious beliefs and especially his view of the world; in short, they influence his whole culture and society. The Oxford English Dictionary defines religion as, "A state of life bound by monastic vows; ...recognition on the part of man of some higher or unseen power as having control of his destiny; ...action or conduct indicating a belief in, reverence for and desire to please a divine ruling power;...the exercise or practice of rites or observances implying this" (1962). The cargo cult is a state of life; it is a mentality which permeates other aspects of life and in that sense it is a religion. The forty-eight terms identified by Kamma which characterize certain aspects of the movements simply illustrate that indeed the movements penetrate all of life for the cargo cultist.

Causation and Interpretation of the Cargo Cults

For the purposes of this research the term *cargo cult* will be used as the primary means of identifying the movements. There is a danger of being misunderstood in using this term since it is immediately identified with economic and materialistic causes. Cargo, as defined earlier, is more than simply

material goods. A more application-oriented definition of the word as practiced by the cultists themselves would more accurately define material goods to include: food, clothing, valuable goods, economic development, money, technological advancements, political freedom, knowledge, peace, social justice, or any and everything which is viewed as needful to live a happy and harmonious life. *Cargo cult*, as a term to define the movements, is chosen simply because in Melanesia the aspect of receiving cargo in some form or another is present in ninety percent of the movements (Steinbauer 1979, 195).

To answer the question of why cargo cults occur would, as Kenelm Burridge has observed, "entail raising profound metaphysical issues" (Burridge 1960, 246). Kamma has attempted to put the movements, or at least the terminology used to describe the movements, into twelve rather cumbersome and repetitive categories. This actually is helpful in gaining a broad understanding of the development of the causal factors of the movements but lacks organization and definition. Kamma stated what the movements have been called and then attempted to place them in categories. This seems to be what led to his frustration in dealing with the cults. He could find no real consensus as he warily

circles from term to term. Narrowing the categories in the development of the causal factors is of prime concern in wading through the individual hypotheses and research specific literature. Most writers are content to put forth their particular view regarding the causal factors.

There are some eclectic approaches (Oosterwal 1973, Strelan 1978, Steinbauer 1979, Trompf 1991) which attempt to more narrowly define and categorize the available material. Oosterwal presented an evaluation of various messianic movements from a theological perspective. Drawing on the more individualistic approaches of Lanternari (liberation movements), Lawrence (nationalistic movements), La Barre (crisis cult), Linton (nativistic movements) and Wallace (revitalization movements), he attempted to find the normative cause.

Oosterwal asked perhaps the most foundational question in seeking to synthesize the material: "Why do different crises, political and economic, psychological and religious, external and internal, individual and social, in their complexity and large variety of circumstances, precipitate the same revelation, the same messianic movement?" (Oosterwal 1973, 13). Oosterwal found his answer in a causative

factor which transcends all human factors put forth by the various sciences. He said that, "Ultimately, the prophetic revelations and messianic movements are a problem of theology" (Oosterwal 1973, 13). Oosterwal himself could be accused of simply adding to the terminology by calling the movements *theological movements* but his approach is one which is looking for the unifying factor amidst the many distinctions and dichotomies already present.

Friedrich Steinbauer has done extensive research into the causal factors of Melanesian cargo cults beginning first with his doctoral thesis, followed by a book on Melanesian cargo cults. What Steinbauer has done is classify again the copious data available about the cargo cults into categories. His classifications are somewhat more manageable than the twelve categories suggested by Kamma. Steinbauer identified five categories or classifications which are:

1. Socio-political movements:

caused by acculturation and cultural contact related problems.

2. Christian-ethical movements:

produced by the world view of a particular group and related to the problem of syncretism.

3. Cultural-historical movements:

the result of cultural tendencies and heritage.

4. National-economic movements:

inspired by political and economic conditions.

5. Synoptic movements:

resulting from a combination of the four factors above.

(Steinbauer 1979, 102)

Using Steinbauer's motif, each of the categories may be considered representative of a particular profession or interest.

Socio-political Interpretation

Those who could be identified as defining the movements as socio-political movements are primarily government officials. From this perspective the cargo cults are seen as a hindrance to peace and order in the society and either need to be removed or suppressed. Explanation for the cults and ways to avert cultic activity center upon maintaining order. Government anthropologists like F. E. Williams in New Guinea understood that the loss of traditional tribal values and customs because of new mores being introduced resulted in a feeling of inferiority which was manifested in a defensiveness towards Westerners.

Williams sought to persuade government officials to rekindle traditional tribal and cultural activities to alleviate this loss (Williams 1923). The manifestation of the unusual activity associated with the cults was considered the native attempt of reestablishing traditional native values and rejecting the Westerner. Often the movements took on a nationalistic or revolutionary tone which some colonial governments chose to suppress by force. Lanternari spoke specifically of this kind of suppression and can also be placed in this category as the title of his book, *The Religion of the Oppressed*, seems to suggest. Lanternari viewed the cargo cults as primarily being, "...the product of an agrarian society's reaction to an alien culture" (Lanternari 1963, 185). The socio-political disorganization of traditional Melanesian societies brought on by slavery, colonialization, economic and social exploitation, political and social domination, migration and simple cultural diversity which was not previously known are the mitigating factors behind the cargo cults, from Lanternari's perspective. His contention was that the movements are the expression of oppressed and dissatisfied people who have not been able to withstand the shock of sudden contact with another culture.

Kenelm Burridge has contributed significantly to the understanding of cargo cults from a socio-political premise. His books *Mambu* (1960) and *New Heaven, New Earth* (1969) outline the struggle of Melanesian man to gain a measure of human dignity, along with economic and social equality. From Burridge's perspective, Melanesians seek to create a "new man" who is capable of meeting the needs of changing times and create a "new society" which will be just and meet the needs, hopes, and aspirations of the people. This was the political platform of the charismatic leader Mambu, a Roman Catholic altar boy from the Kanakas tribe in Papua New Guinea. According to Burridge, the need for a new man and a new society occurs as a result of disillusionment with current levels of achievement. This is particularly true as comparisons are made with the Melanesian's own socio-economic condition and that of the Westerner. It was a humbling experience for Melanesians to take orders from white men, which for the Melanesian implied moral dominance. The old man was not sufficient to meet the new challenges thrust upon him by the cultural invader, thus a new man was needed to meet that challenge. The new man took many forms, including turning to Christianity in order to

eradicate the effects of past sins and hopefully learn the secret of success and access to material wealth.

In like manner, the many development projects, government programs and business ventures were undergirded with millennial expectations. These unrealistic expectations were never realized and paved the way for men like Mambu to build his own cargoistic society. The government and mission perception of this activity was that Mambu was propagating a rebellion. Burrige perceived it as not so much a threat to the government and mission as an expression of the people to find an integral place in the scheme of things. What Mambu and others were seeking was full acceptance as human beings and equality along with full access to the means to produce and obtain material goods.

Christian-ethical Interpretation

The Christian-ethical approach is primarily represented by missionaries. There are some distinctions which need to be made when speaking of the Christian-ethical interpretation of these movements. That is, that there are missionary anthropologists like Nida and Luzbetak who could be listed under this category because of their distinctively Christian perspective of the social sciences, but in actuality

they have adopted a more social-political or cultural-historical point of view regarding the cargo cults. The Christian-ethicist would view the movements as resulting from man's in general, and Melanesian man's in particular, desire for a fulfilled and happy life both now and in the hereafter, which has gone unrealized because of uncontrollable events in the past. Strelan expressed it this way:

Cargo cults are the evidence of the existence of an awareness that man's present condition is not what it could be or should be, and that things were not always as they are now. The reason for this situation is that in the mythical past, Melanesian man made certain decisions and performed certain actions which altered his status and made him inferior to other men, and deprived him of the means and opportunity to attain that desirable condition, known in theological language as, 'salvation' (Strelan 1978, 67).

The cosmology of the Melanesian would suggest that the way for him to restore his lost position and happiness would be through the mystical and magical powers which are ever present around him. Their 'search for salvation', as Strelan would say, is found in attempts to control these spiritual forces around them through these mystical and magical means. The arrival of Westerners and with them vast quantities of material goods and apparent supernatural powers made it evident that the white man had gained the secret of

obtaining salvation in the present world and in the world to come by virtue of his great wealth.

Herman Strauss echoed this perspective when he said that Melanesians could not be certain that the supernatural powers of their traditional religion were strong enough to bring about the long anticipated Golden Age. Melanesians turned to Christ because it was believed that the *parousia* would usher in the Golden Age for them (Strauss 1970, 140-157). This view sees the cargo cults as a syncretistic movement combining the traditional religion of the tribal people of Melanesia with the Christian message. Strauss thought that the syncretism had led to a distortion of the biblical view of man. The solution to this spiritual confusion can only be found by returning to a Christian view of man. Strelan agreed that the cargo cults are a quest for man's identity and essentially anthropocentric in their tendencies but not necessarily individualistic. The rituals and worship of cargo cultists are primarily directed towards ancestors and always socio-centric (Strelan 1978, 67). Strelan's thesis is that, "...Cargo cults are serious attempts to respond to deep rooted imperatives in Melanesian culture. They are external, ritualistic expressions of genuinely indigenous religious beliefs and hopes which

existed long before the arrival of the gospel" (Strelan 1978, 11). The emphasis of both Strauss and Strelan is based on the belief that the cargo cults are not necessarily the result of the introduction of Western culture and religion upon primal, tribal Melanesian man but rather are part of his cosmology. The irrational behavior often associated with the cargo cults is Western man's perception, not the cargoist's.

Understanding and, if possible, evaluating these beliefs is, however, a major difficulty. As Trompf has observed, "It is now eminently clear that accurate generalizations about Melanesian religions are very difficult to make; it is becoming more palpable that anyone wishing to assess these religions has to first gauge the effect of over one hundred years of prejudice and ethnocentricities" (Trompf 1991, 10). The issue that Trompf has raised is that early contact with the cargo cults by explorers, government officials and anthropologists generally concluded that the chaotic nature of the cults led them to believe that these people, "...did not ever possess anything fine enough to be called a religion" (Trompf 1991, 11). What Strelan, Strauss, Oosterwal, Steinbauer and Trompf have concluded is that the cargo cults are a religion or rather *the* religion of Melanesia. This is not without

foundation; in fact, most ethnographic research also concludes that there is a deep religious connection with the movements.

Cultural-historical Interpretation

The cultural-historical view of these movements is representative of the conclusions of anthropologists and ethnologists. There is a striking similarity between this interpretation and the socio-political view primarily because many of the government officials who reported on the early cargo cult movements in Melanesia were themselves anthropologists like F.E. Williams. The distinctive of the cultural-historical position is that it defines these movements as a kind of disequilibrium which occurred at the point of contact with a different culture. This somewhat disruptive kind of cross-cultural contact in turn drove the native population back to their roots to re-establish the value and significance of their society. The socio-political perspective is that the movements were revolutionary in nature, striving to be independent of Western rule. Both points of view actually see the same causal factors, that of cultural confrontation, but with having different results.

Early anthropologists like Ralph Linton called the movements "nativistic" and categorized them as an attempt by members of the society to safeguard their cultural values which were being threatened and or dying as a result of contact with a domineering foreign culture (Linton 1943). This seems to be the basic thesis which is repeated and further developed by other anthropologists. Anthony Wallace was one that built on Linton's work by defining six stages that occur during the transformation or, as he called it, the revitalization of a culture. Wallace suggested that there is: (1) a time of reformulation or choosing a new life style, (2) a time of communication where there is an exchange of information regarding the new method of living, (3) a time of organization, (4) a time of adaptation, (5) a time of cultural transformation and (6) a time of routinization (Wallace 1956). These stages have been helpful in understanding the contextualization which occurs when two cultures interact. But like Linton, Wallace seems to use the cargo cults of Melanesia as examples which simply underscore particular anthropological suppositions. It wasn't until research done by men like Kamma (1972) and Lawrence (1964) that an indepth study of the cargo

cults was made from the cultural-historical perspective.

Kamma took a somewhat different approach than the standard definition of the cultural-historical position primarily in regard to the cause of cargoistic activity. However, his evaluation of the people in these movements of wanting to return to a historic utopia place him in this category. From Kamma's perspective as a missionary in the Radja Ampat area of Irian Jaya, Indonesia from 1932 to 1942, he concluded that:

In a survey of the historical factors which could have influenced these movements, it is evident that in the first place the crisis arose from objective data: the geographic environment, sickness and death, but along with them the socio-economic factors of food and ceremonial exchange. At first contact with foreigners did not affect the movements (Kamma 1972, 277).

Kamma strongly discounts the idea that it was Western influence that caused the cargo cult movements. He does say, however, that later many of the positive achievements of Western technology were adopted by the Biak-Numfor people. It was the gap that existed between the ideal world as imagined by the people and told of in their mythology and the reality of life (suffering and death) that caused these people to

always reach back to their past to find meaning and significance in life. Mythology by its very nature must be able to support, stabilize and account for everything that exists. It is for this reason, Kamma suggested, that foreigners were mythologized and that the Christian message was also able to be incorporated or become points of contact for identification in the mythical sphere (Kamma 1972, 279). It was Kamma's view that Christianity was used as confirmation of the truths found in the ancient myths of the Biak-Numfor people and not the reverse. In like manner, other aspects of Western culture are evaluated and incorporated into their mythology. The confrontation with another culture and specifically here a Western culture did not seem to cause unusual cargoistic activity but was rather the normal means of the Irianese to handle such a crisis. Kamma would not actually speak of association with another culture as confrontation or crisis but in the final analysis this is what has occurred. The value of Kamma's research is his suggestion that such cultural confrontation was handled in a normal and acceptable way within the culture, similar to the crisis that was caused through sickness and death.

Peter Lawrence and his experience with the Papua New Guineans in the Madang district led him to conclude that the cargo cult movements there were based on the epistemology of the people. The Papuans, having observed major imbalances between their traditional culture, economy and politics and the culture, economy and politics of the West began to view themselves as inferior. Their value as a people and society had suffered a staggering blow which was most evident in the abundant material possessions of the white man as compared to the seemingly lack of any valuable possession on the part of the Melanesian. Lawrence explained:

Motivation, or the natives' reasons for wanting Western goods, must be seen as their reaction to the main events of contact in terms of their traditional social values. These reasons were never constant. They varied according to whether the people thought that they were suffering privation and indignity or that they had some hope for improvement. Means, or the natives' conviction that they could obtain cargo almost exclusively by ritual, must be seen as their attempt to control the new situation by the same sorts of techniques as they had always had good cause to assume were effective in the old, very largely because they could not conceive any alternative (Lawrence 1964, 223-224).

In a society which is based on equivalence, reciprocity and ritual, as is typical of Melanesian society, equality of access to material wealth is

enjoyed by all members of society. The material possessions of the people not only have economic and practical value but are also symbols of relationships. Historically there was no equality between Westerners and their goods and the Melanesians and their goods. The reciprocal type relationship which was practiced and enjoyed by the people did not exist with the Westerner and where there was no reciprocal distribution of wealth there could be no harmonious relationships. In the thinking of the Melanesians, (as Lawrence envisioned it), then; if equality could not be achieved through reciprocity then the next viable solution was supernatural and mystical through various rituals.

In the same sense, then, the people are reaching into their past traditions to find answers for the problems they face today. In spite of the advancement of Melanesian society both politically and economically, which was largely due to the coming of Westerners, there was no revolution in the people's basic way of thinking. Lawrence made this observation: "Their experience in domestic service and on the plantations and gold fields rarely if ever gave them new economic values to take back to their villages. Very few of them had any understanding of the purpose

of the work they performed: the industrial value of copra, gold and other commodities they helped produce" (Lawrence 1964, 228).

The lack of comprehension of Western ways is really no measure of the inferiority of the cargo ideological system. It simply expresses that there is a difference of perspective. For Lawrence, the answer of meeting and overcoming the cargo ideology was to introduce social attitudes and ideas which are compatible with those of the West. He understood the economic development of Melanesia as the primary stimuli to accomplish this.

Economic Interpretation

All of the interpretations thus far have developed in them some form of economic motivation on the part of the people who are involved in cargo cult activity. It is difficult to separate the economic motivations from other more esoteric ones simply because in Melanesia "cargo" in some form or another is one of the anticipated outcomes of ninety percent of the movements. It is the sociologist who leans toward this kind of explanation for the existence of cargo cults and Peter Worsley perhaps stands out from the rest as being the most economically-oriented of the

interpreters of cargo cultism. Worsley contended that the movements are a reaction to the oppression and degradation experienced at the hand of foreign invaders. His perspective is developed following World War II at which time a large number of cargo cults emerged. Worsley perhaps carried the economic theme threaded throughout the cargo movements to extremes when he incorporated a Marxist philosophy in his writings. He has been highly criticized for this yet in the introduction of a later edition of his book he made these retractions:

When I wrote of people desperate for some explanation of the irrational and unjust world in which they lived, desperate for a solution to their problems and for a faith to steer by, I meant a lot more than that men had economic motivations...This was indeed largely due to a Marxist orientation in which there were elements of determinism...from these I now dissent (Worsley 1968, lviii-lix).

Worsley has been the champion of the economic interpretation of the cargo cults and perhaps still is. The value of his view is that it has at least focused attention on the dehumanizing factors of cultural conflict of both colonialism and neo-colonialism as Worsley described in detail the devastation left by both the Japanese and Allied forces after World War II.

Synoptic Interpretation

The synoptic approach is not representative of a particular profession or field of study but rather denotes a neutral analysis of the problem of cargo cults and its interpretation. The goal of the researcher is to impartially review the data and piece together the causative factors behind these movements. The synoptic approach obviously could not have been utilized at the initial stages of researching the phenomenon of the cargo cults since the knowledge base about the cults would have been minimal or nonexistent. At present there are approximately 400 published works on cargo cults from nearly 150 writers. It is from this wealth of information that definite opinions have been established about the cargo cults. Friedrich Steinbauer was one of the initial researchers to make these codifications about the movements. He wrote:

The problem has been looked at as an exotic curiosity for far too long and it has been treated accordingly. Either one saw expressions of a primitive culture, symptoms of defection from the Christian church, or the outgrowth of political revolutionary action in these movements. In many cases one hoped to remove the arising difficulty by suppression. For a long time one saw only symptoms without recognizing proper causes (Steinbauer 1979, 107).

The synoptic approach adopted by Steinbauer sought to analyze one hundred-eighty six cargo cults in

Melanesia and determine the characteristics of each of the movements. Steinbauer noted one hundred characteristics and by using what he calls a simple computation, came up with an average frequency percent of that characteristic's manifestation in any of the movements studied. His final analysis suggested that it was contact with Western cultures which led to the phenomenon of the cargo cults and that they are the legitimate expression of the Melanesians to cope with the resulting changes. Although Steinbauer classifies himself as a Christian-ethicist, his conclusions are more closely related to the cultural-historical or socio-political interpretations.

Another researcher who has adopted the synoptic approach is Garry Trompf. He said, "We are now in a better position to assess the usefulness of earlier interpretations and to isolate those key issues and problems which require discussion and resolution" (Trompf 1991, 189). Trompf adopted the typical definition of the cargo cults, alluding to the fact that they are ritualistic attempts of the people to prepare for the coming of goods through mystical and magical means. He also expressed a deep concern that many have ignored the intrinsically religious or

spiritual nature of the cargo cults and suggested a new agenda for the evaluation of these movements.

In the first place we must set a new agenda for the analysis of cargo cults in terms of the continuing influence of significant elements of traditional religions, elements which have a strong bearing on the relative degree of response to Christianity in particular and colonial intervention in general. In the second place, social scientists are going to have to shift out of those mindsets which disallow religion any explanatory function in the analysis of social change and broaden their concept of religion to incorporate aspects of social life which Westerners too often compartmentalize into non-religious spheres (Trompf 1991, 201-202).

Trompf hit on a major issue when discussing the cargo cults, which is that the movements are religious in nature. They are not primarily an anthropological or sociological problem which perhaps is why researchers who do not seriously consider religious and theological issues relating to the cargo cults have such difficulty in reaching conclusions about the nature of these movements.

Conclusion

In the final analysis virtually all researchers are eclectic in their interpretations. Only the very early observers did not have the benefit of multiple perspectives. At this stage of the research one can

not help but fall into the synoptic category by virtue of the great volume of literature available on cargo cult movements. The following table illustrates the progression which has occurred over the past 67 years.

Year	Socio-Political	Christian Ethical	Cultural Historic	Economic	Synoptic
1923	Williams				
1943			Linton		
1952			Kamma		
1954	Nida				
1956			Wallace		
1960	Burridge				
1963	Laternari		Luzbetak		
1964			Lawrence		
1967		Oosterwal		Worsley	
1969	LaBarre				
1970	Gilson	Strauss	Cochrane		
1971		Steinbaur	Long		
1972					
1973		Oosterwal			
1978		Strelan			
1979					Steinbaur
1980		Hayward			Holmes
1985			Gesch		Schwarz
1988			D'Arcy		Lenz
1989					Strelan
1991					Trompf

However, at this stage the field of opinion has narrowed still further. Kamma began with twelve categories and Steinbauer narrowed it to four, the fifth being the synoptic interpretation. Now, it can be said that there are two major views regarding the origin and manifestation of the cargo cults.

The first is that the cargo cults are primarily a reaction of the Melanesians contact with the West. The view could be called the *cultural conflict* interpretation. This perspective attributes as reactionary the behavior and beliefs of the cargo cultists. Reactionary in the sense that explanations needed to be given to explain the reality of a people and a culture that was different from their own. The normal way for a Melanesian to explain the unknown was through the cargo myth and this involved ritual behavior which is also seen in these cults. Often the western missionary found himself somehow involved in the cargo cult movement even if he was unaware of it. The myth of Ataphakon-Sawapacu from the Auyu and Sawi tribes presented in the following chapter illustrate how the coming of Dutch government and the coming of missionaries are incorporated into the myth as means of validating their existence.

The second view which emerges could be called the *religious conflict* interpretation. This is a conviction that cargo cults and beliefs are not necessarily the result of cultural conflict alone but are an expression of deep religious hopes and aspirations of Melanesian people. The difference between the ideal world as envisioned by the Melanesia and the reality of everyday life invoke religious questions which the cargo cultist attempts to answer through mythology. This is evident in the sin and salvation motif of cargo cult mythology. The "blessings" of the material world have become the standard for measuring success in the spiritual. Religious rituals are the key to unlocking the secrets of the ideal world. Rituals permeate every aspect of life for the cargo cultist in order to bring back some of the dignity lost because of previous, ancestral sin.

The cultural and religious conflicts observed in Irian Jaya today have expressed themselves in cargoistic tendencies such as certain ritual behavior associated with Christianity like healing, prophecy and visions. Cargo behavior is also observed in activities surrounding the dead. These activities and behaviors exhibit a rational which is decidedly cargoistic but

could not be classified as a cargo cult or a cargo cult movement. The final outcome is a modern society with values based in a cargoism.