BUCHBESPRECHUNGEN

Andrew Lattas: Cultures of Secrecy: Reinventing Race in Bush Kaliai Cargo Cults. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. 1998. 353 pp. Including Glossary of Frequently Used Melanesian and Mouk Terms, Bibliography and Index

> If one cannot state a matter clearly enough so that even an intelligent twelve-year-old can understand it, one should remain in the cloistered walls of the university and laboratory until one gets a better grasp of one's subject matter (Margaret Mead).[1]

When we first read this book we declined the invitation to review it because we feared that doing so would pose an ethical problem for us. The volume is about cargo cult activity in Kaliai, West New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea. It focuses on the "Story", a cargo movement which was at the height of its activity between 1969 and 1975. Although we spent approximately 30 months in Kaliai between 1966 and 1985 and conducted research and published on a variety of topics including mythology, political change, economic development, social change, and cargo belief and activity including the Story, our work is virtually invisible in this book. Lattas does cite some of our writing on the introduction of the Gloucester Local Government council in 1966–67 and on the Story, but his citations concern trivia – e.g. that bamboo wind instruments are called *mukmuk*, and that whites are called *pura* in Lusi, a local language (8, 18). Otherwise he ignores our presence in Kaliai, our discussion of the founding and early activities of the Story, and our analysis of Story activities. As a result of Lattas's decision to dismiss our work, anyone reading his volume would reasonably believe that he was the first anthropologist (with the exception of Father Janssen, a Roman Catholic priest with anthropological training) to do extended research in Kaliai or with the Story. Neither we nor Janssen make it into his index. It is difficult to understand why Lattas made this choice. In the end, we decided to accept the invitation to review Lattas's book. Our decision was not made in a fit of pique at having been ignored, but because the more closely we read this book, the more concerned we were that larger issues are at stake than whether the author took account of our publications.

To correct the impression of a vacuum left by Lattas, we will provide a brief history of our early work in Kaliai. Our first residence there was for doctoral research in 1966–67, when Aikele's movement was active on the Bibling Ridge. When the Australian authorities introduced local government to the area, over the objections of many of the people of the Kaliai interior, David accompanied patrol officer Ross Kelly to Bagai, a village on the Bibling Ridge where a gathering of people from several "bush Kaliai" villages refused to participate in elections for the members of the new council. Lattas ignores our account of the election and of earlier circumstances that had led the Assistant District Officer to provide Aikele with the seed coconuts and tools with which he began the Bibling Ridge development scheme – a scheme that became a cargo cult (Counts 1968, 1971).

We first met the leader of the Story, Napasisio, on a government work boat, the Garnet, in 1971.[2] We were on our way to Kaliai for our second field trip and Napasisio was on his way home, just having been released from gaol. For hours he sat alone on the bench opposite us and engaged in active conversation with unseen beings. Our Kaliai

friends told us he was mad (*mangamanga*). It appeared to us that he was hallucinating. During that 1971 field trip we interviewed people from several coastal villages about the Story. Some of them were Napasisio's ardent supporters, some his occasional adherents, and some thought that he and all of his followers were lacking in critical judgement and common sense. Dorothy and our daughter Rebecca, together with a troupe of coastal villagers, spent two weeks in Gilau, a long abandoned interior village site that Napasisio's followers had rebuilt to be the primary residential centre for his adherents. While Dorothy was there Napasisio and his followers told her the origins of the Story: Napasisio received the secrets of cargo from Amulmul, a snake-human changeling spirit being, after he submitted to the efforts of Amulmul's daughter to seduce him. Then Amulmul appeared to him and taught him the secrets and rituals for obtaining cargo.

In 1971 five of the seven coastal Kaliai villages had been virtually abandoned, their residents having moved inland to their traditional lands as a part of their participation in Napasisio's Story. Many of these villagers stayed for an extended period of time to the frustration of mission and administration authorities, whose attempts to suppress the Story lent creditability to its claims. Because of the iron-fisted opposition of their Big Man, a renowned sorcerer who forbade anyone to have anything to do with it, no one from the coastal village of Lauvore joined the Story, and only six adult Kandoka residents participated. The other coastal villages did not act as units. Some people went to Gilau to stay for long periods, while others moved back and forth between Gilau and the coast thinking that they would better their opportunity to accumulate goods if they made copra from coconuts to sell as well as participating in Story ritual. Most people of Lauvore and Kandoka, the two easternmost Kaliai villages, thought that Story followers lacked good judgement. One man laughingly told us how he had made money out of the Story. He had cut bubble-wrap packing material (obtained from us) into small pieces and sold it to Story followers as the skin of the snake-changeling Amulmul from whom Napasisio received the secrets of the Story. Although villagers' approach to the Story varied according to their experience and their perceptions of what options were most likely to be successful, all these people shared a goal. They wished to achieve social, economic and political parity with and respect from white people. As Peter Lawrence argues, Melanesians achieve social value and prestige by accumulating wealth which one can then display and present to others with whom one wishes to engage as an equal in a relationship of reciprocity (Lawrence 1964).

We were again in Kaliai in 1975–76 when most of Napasisio's followers abandoned him in the weeks and months after September 1975. Napasisio had predicted that on Papua New Guinea's Independence Day storms would wash away the coastal villages and mountains would open and spill out their cargo which would be made available to those of Napasisio's followers who were worthy. In Kaliai, Independence Day 1975 was bright and sunny without a drop of rain or an earth tremor. The mountains had not opened to disgorge the cargo, the people had not been transformed, and the world had continued to operate in the old way. Shortly thereafter, all but Napasisio's most devoted followers returned to their home villages. He, his kin, and his few remaining followers retired to Meitavale, a village site on his ancestral land.

As a result of our research in 1971 and 1975–76, we published on the origins and ideology of the Story, on the movement's synthesis of traditional and Roman Catholic ritual and teachings, and on the assumptions and goals shared by cultists, some-time cultists, and non-cultists about the nature of time and

change, and the alternative possible strategies for success.[3]

Our observations and analysis, however, would not in any way have changed Lattas's interpretation. His concerns are those of post-modernist discourse and are phrased in those terms. The general subject Lattas addresses in his book is the way in which Melanesians and the colonial and post-colonial authorities have interacted, both borrowing from and affecting each other. His central argument seems to be that in Kaliai cargo cult ideology gender relations mirror race relations and are prior to them. Therefore by transforming gender relations one may also transform race relations. He asserts that "Like all social orders, traditional Kaliai society was built around gender, so it is not surprising to find people seeing all order, including a new racial order, as being an alternative gender order" (167). Lattas also feels that "Censure's cult was directed toward managing a new hybrid culture of guilt", and that "We are dealing here with the emergence of a new national ideology centred on the family as a moral space of self-identity and self-transformation. I see Censure's cult as localizing this ideology" (174). The Story is Lattas's proving ground for these assertions.

Unfortunately for Lattas's analysis, the Story had a tenure of only six years and was abandoned more than a decade before Lattas began his study in the Kaliai interior in 1986. Napasisio was ill and deserted by virtually all his followers when Lattas arrived on the scene in 1986. He died in 1988. Therefore, much of Lattas's information concerning Napasisio's actions, understandings, and intentions – his "ontological schemes" – is based on patrol reports and hearsay, comes from conversations with a dying has-been whom many Kaliai considered to be deranged, or is derived from the memory and interpretation of others, primarily Napasisio's son Posingen, and his daughter-in-law Theresa. These few people and a defunct cargo movement are the sources Lattas uses to fabricate his representation of "traditional Kaliai society" and the creation of a new "alternative gender order", a "culture of guilt" and a "national ideology". We will deal here with the new gender order.

As support for his assertion that adherents of the Story were attempting to introduce a new set of gender relations, Lattas recounts a version of the bullroarer origin myth in which early human society was one of relative equality between women and men. Lattas says: "There was, as yet, no culture of terror, no secret monstrous tricks through which to create the violence and fear that later became the basis of traditional Kaliai society".[4] Then one of the women, Kewak, accidentally created the first bullroarer. Women used the sound of the bullroarer, which they said was the cry of a spirit named Arku, to terrorise men who ran into the forest where they covered with their young children while women danced, sang and feasted with the spirits in the village square. The women's secret was discovered by Kewak's brother Kowdock [sic!] who appropriated the bullroarer, thereby capturing the spirit Arku, killed Kewak, and used his purloined knowledge to enable men to rule over women (156). Lattas then discusses the "crucified world of the feminine" embodied by Jesus who – according to Napasisio – was really a woman and who was killed by Caesar and Herod because she was attempting to usurp male power. He quotes Posingen:

> I believe Jesus is a woman. If Jesus was a man, I do not believe that Caesar and Herod would have spoken to have him killed; he would still be alive. But because she was a woman, they spoke: "Why should this fucking kind of woman go in front of us? Why? Kill her and get rid of her" (160).

Next Lattas says

> This killing of a female Jesus by men [...] was seen to resonate with, if not reenact [...] Kaliai men's murder of Kewak. In the Bible Jesus was killed for trying to empower the poor in relationship to their rulers; likewise, in Kaliai myths

> of matriarchy Kewak is killed for trying to empower and move women into a position of dominance over men. Those who empower the weak come to be murdered. They are killed for trying to create the rules of a new social order (161).

We fail to follow Lattas's logic here. In the sections cited above Lattas recounts a story in which a woman, Kewak, discovers the voice and power of a powerful spirit. Women use that knowledge to upset a social order of equality and terrorise men who are driven out of the village. They are in "a position of dominance over men". These men are without power. Led by Kowdock, they discover the secret, kill the woman who is the leader of their oppressors, and set up a new social order. Setting aside the questionable accuracy of Lattas's claim that traditional Kaliai society was based on "violence and fear", according to the origin myth that he cites, the originators of the violence and fear were not men, but w o m e n.[5]

The next element in Lattas's argument is the belief by Posingen, that the monarch of the British Commonwealth is a queen because Jesus was a woman. Lattas says:

> Here we are also dealing with intersecting images of feminine power from different cultures and more especially with the way the European [sic!] monarchical figure of the queen came to reinforce cargo cult reinterpretations of traditional Kaliai myths of matriarchy. The West's festishization of state power came to be rendered as participating in the Kaliai's fetishization of women's reproductive powers [...]. The fact that all cultures have to engage the feminine allowed the figure of woman to emerge as a common mediating term that could bring together the different symbolic resources of European and Kaliai cultures to create new processes of becoming not totally subordinated to tradition or to the white man (163–164).

He then quotes Posingen who believes that the queen would be generous with the people of Papua New Guinea were her good intentions not blocked by white Australians:

> With youse Australians, supposing the queen alone looked after everything here [in Papua New Guinea], then all something would be free. There is the queen, however only youse men are in the government, and so with the government all something is not free when it comes to us of Papua New Guinea. It has been totally blocked. The reason is like this: if there was just the queen alone who was boss, then it would go straight. The queen is the boss, but all youse men go and want to stand up for government [positions], and so with all the laws of the queen, youse have downed them all (164).

Before discussing the quality of Lattas's translations from Tok Pisin into English, we must ask which 'white men' exactly are 'subordinating' the Kaliai. Papua New Guinea became an independent country in 1975. Those holding 'state power' are Papua New Guinea nationals who are elected by Papua New Guinea nationals, and have been for almost a quarter of a century. Who are the oppressors that the Kaliai are supposed to be struggling against?

Finally, in a lengthy quote from Posingen, we learn that Napasisio forbade his followers to hit their wives because Jesus is female. Realizing this, white men do not beat women but respect them.

> Because Jesus is a woman that is why I see this [white men respecting white women]. But us natives [sic!], we do not respect women [...]. We beat them, put spears on top of them, kill them, but you masters do not do this. You know about the origin of things, and you respect women (164–165).

This is the same Posingen who reasoned that Jesus must have been a woman because the white authorities would not have killed 'her' had she been a man. Lattas seems unaware of the contradictions in his own arguments and in the statements of his informants. Yet these utterances are the basis for his belief that the followers of the Story intended to create an "alternative gender order", a "culture of guilt", and a "national ideology", intentions

that he extends to all of the Kaliai. Lattas seems to have lost sight of the fact that in the early 1970s when it was at its peak, Napasisio and his followers in the Story had the clear goal to obtain cargo and the respect it represents. Participants wanted to obtain manufactured goods and find the road to development so that they would no longer "live as we always have and be nothing" (Counts 1972:377). It was a goal shared by the Kaliai who ignored the Story and continued making copra, and by those who tried to walk the ‚two roads', the road of the Story and the road of cash cropping and participation in the local government council. – Thus Lattas's elaborately constructed house of theory collapses under the weight of its inconsistencies and contradictions and Lattas's failure to take into account the purpose of the Story.

There is also the problem of Lattas's untenable translation of Tok Pisin interviews into English. Rather than clarifying the contributions of his informants, his translation makes them more obscure. He says:

> All the interviews quoted in this book were carried out in Pisin [...]. Most villagers are fluent in Pisin, which they use in everyday conversations, meetings, and cult activities. Instead of translating Pisin into "proper" English, I have sought to maintain the texture and resonances of people's way of talking by translating it in a way that is perhaps closer to transcription because it exploits the English resonances and metaphors in Pisin. I have done this in order to transfer into English some of the ontological schemes within which people operate (xviii).

Lattas seems to assume, as do most anthropologists, that his informants are both intelligent and rational – within the strictures of what he terms their 'ontological schemes'. However, his transcription/translation of the above mentioned quote from Posingen (beginning with "With youse Australians [...]") leaves Posingen seeming to mouth gibberish rather than "resonances and metaphors". If one is fluent in Tok Pisin, then it is possible to back-transcribe this passage to recover the original statement and then to gain some understanding of what Posingen was trying to convey. It would run something like this:

> *Long yupela ol Australia, sapos queen bilong yumi yet i bin lukautin olgeta samting hia [long Papua Nu Gini], olgeta samting i nogat pe. Na i gat queen bilong yumi, tasol yupela ol man tasol i stap long gavman, na long gavman olgeta samting i gat pe – i no kam nating long taim i kamap long mipela long Papua Nu Gini. Em i pas olgeta. As bilong en olsem: sapos queen tasol em yet i bos, olgeta samting bai i ran stret. Na queen i bos, tasol yupela ol man i laik go sanap long gavman, na long ol lo bilong queen, yupela i bin daunim.*

If our back transcription into Tok Pisin is anywhere close to accurate, then what Posingen meant in the quoted passage is better rendered as follows:

> Under you Australians, if our queen were really in charge then everything here in Papua New Guinea would be free. She is our queen, but government positions are held only by you men. Therefore, when things arrive here for us Papua New Guineans, the government will not allow them to come to us freely. Our access to everything is cut off. It is like this: if the queen herself were really in charge, everything would be operate correctly. We have a queen who should be in charge, but you men usurp power. If the queen alone were in charge of things here in Papua New Guinea, then everything would be fine, but you men are able to suppress her law.

Lattas seems to know that his translation is inadequate, for in introducing it he paraphrases the meaning so that the reader can grasp it (164). We find it disconcerting that the editors of a well known series bearing the imprimatur of a respected academic press would allow this kind of material to reach publication. Not only do such translations do a disservice to Lattas's informants, he does disservice to himself when, in order to translate Tok Pisin "yupela", he chooses to render the English pronoun "you" – which as he

surely knows is plural – as "youse". The choice of a restricted dialectical pronoun form associated with class distinctions should never have been permitted. If the example we have chosen were the only one of its kind, it could be overlooked. It is not, and the large number of such translations detracts seriously from this work.[6]

This has been a critical review of Lattas's book, but the volume does have value. Although there are minor errors in them, his first two chapters, based on patrol reports and on interviews with former cult members, contain sections that are valuable. In these chapters Lattas discusses the history of the Kaliai interior, the arrival of Europeans, and the early history of cargo cults in the Kaliai. They are informative and relatively well written, as is his final chapter on Kaliai cargo cults and the New Tribes Mission. In this chapter Lattas argues that the Mission's unrelenting message of millenarian Christianity with its focus on the immediacy of the return of Jesus, the threats of hellfire and damnation, and the promise of heavenly reward constitute a powerful cargo movement in and of itself. In Lattas's view this message has co-opted and transformed indigenous cargo movements much more effectively than did the opposition of the government or the Catholic church. He also effectively points out the irony that in trying to abolish traditional beliefs and practices the missionaries must keep them ever in people's minds as examples of Satan against which new converts must be on guard. He says: "Although the new mission seeks to abolish traditional beliefs and customs, it also requires and keeps alive this traditional world of fear from which it offers protection"(292).

Lattas's "Cultures of Secrecy" is best, and his writing is most clear, when it reflects the careful scholarship he used in constructing his historical section and when he reports events that he witnessed. Much of the rest, unfortunately, would have led Margaret Mead to point her stick at the cloister and send its author packing.

[1] Quoted by Mitchell from: Rhoda Metraux (ed.), Margaret Mead: Some personal views. New York: W. Norton. 1979:252–253 (Mitchell 1996:123).

[2] Lattas chooses for his own ideological reasons (xl) to call this person "Censure", which he asserts is the local pronunciation of one of the names claimed by Napasisio ("Sen Sio", possibly from St. John). In the early pages of this volume and in the patrol reports of the time, the cult leader is identified by his registered name, Napasisio. The only reason for choosing an alias for a person in an anthropological account is to shield his or her identity. Lattas clearly identifies "Censure" as Napasisio. We do not share Lattas' assumptions about the ideological significance of the name "Censure" in spite of his misleading citation of our work (xl) to suggest that we might agree. We think it is unlikely that "Sen Sio" would be pronounced that way, and that Lattas obtained the agreement by Napasisio's family that "the English word *censure* was part of Censure's name" by a question which, in court, would have been cited as 'leading the witness' (320, end note 4). We, therefore, choose to use the name Napasisio in this review.

[3] See Counts (1972, 1978), Counts and Counts (1976), and Counts and Counts (1977).

[4] One is not sure how Lattas defines "traditional Kaliai society", but the Kaliai with whom we worked for almost two decades – coastal Kaliai who were originally interior people who moved down to the coast early in this century once the area was secured against raiders from the sea – did not live in a society based on violence and fear. We suspect that "violence and fear" is more likely to be a concern among the followers of fundamentalist Christian sects such as the New Tribes Mission where hellfire and damnation are ongoing concerns than among the Kaliai society with which we are familiar.

[5] A more reasonable interpretation of this myth, one that is reflected in the reluctance of Kaliai to share secrets, would be: knowledge is power; secret knowledge is greater power; if you have it, guard it well!

[6] If Lattas was concerned with transferring into English "some of the ontological schemes with-

in which people operate" and with making their words intelligible to his reader he had another option. While translating the Tok Pisin into 'proper', understandable English prose – thereby preserving the eloquence and intelligence with which most Kaliai converse – he could have included an appendix with the texts in the original Tok Pisin and their transcriptions. Readers concerned with indigenous ontological schemes could refer to these appendices. Readers wanting to understand the sense of what Kaliai said could have done so by reading the properly translated text in the narrative flow of the book.

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Dorothy Ayers Counts and David R. Counts

Ulrich Braukämper und Tilahun Mishago: Praise and Teasing. Narrative Songs of the Hadiyya in Southern Ethiopia.
Frankfurt am Main: Frobenius-Institut 1999. 116 S., 32 s/w-Fotos, 1 Kartenskizze. Sonderschriften des Frobenius-Institutes 13.)

In gewisser Weise ist Herders Projekt von den „Stimmen der Völker in Liedern" (1975) immer noch nicht abgeschlossen. Eine jüngere Fortsetzung mit Blick auf einen Beitrag zur Etablierung der Weltliteratur ist Joachim Sartorius' „Atlas der neuen Poesie" (1995). Auch die afrikanische Philologie setzt ihre Arbeit fort, denkt man zum Beispiel an die Übersetzung von Sony Labou Tansis kikongosprachiger Lyrik durch Norbert Stamm (Tansi 1998; Stamm 1998). Hier ist nun eine Edition von Liedern der südäthiopischen Hadiyya zu besprechen, die im Rahmen ethnologischer Forschungen in den Jahren 1970–74 von anonym gebliebenen Sängern aufgezeichnet und in Kooperation mit dem muttersprachlichen Mitherausgeber Tilahun Mishago von Ulrich Braukämper ediert wurden. Solche Koproduktionen sind in zunehmendem Maße festzustellen, in ihnen spiegeln sich die vielfach neu bestimmten bilateralen Forschungsbeziehungen wider. Braukämper besuchte die Hadiyya erneut im Jahre 1994, wobei er feststellen konnte, daß sich mittlerweile ein verstärktes einheimisches Interesse an der Bewahrung des eigenen Kulturerbes herausgebildet hat, was die fast 30 Jahre alten Tonbandaufnahmen wieder aktuell werden ließ. Die Hadiyya stehen damit nicht alleine, sondern teilen dieses Interesse mit anderen südäthiopischen Bevölkerungen. Leider gehen die Herausgeber auf die Motive und Faktoren dieses Prozesses nicht näher ein.

Die Textedition gibt 36 Lieder im Originaltext des Hadiyya und in einer englischen Übersetzung wieder (30–93). Fast ausschließlich ethnographisch orientierte Anmerkungen sichern die kulturellen Bedeu-