

# Encounter of Religions in Papua New Guinea—Toward a Relationship between Christianity and Original Traditions

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*The text introduces Papua New Guinea as a region where an encounter of various cultural and religious traditions occurred in the last several centuries and which still happens today. Christianization has posed a significant cultural change that has taken place recently and at the same time as modernization. Using examples from Papua New Guinea, the study demonstrates that although Christianity can dominate in a particular society, elements of original Indigenous religions can exist in parallel or can create a syncretic synthesis. The aim of the study is to analyze the types of this coexistence and to identify the factors of maintenance and transformation of Indigenous traditions as a result of Christianization as part of the process of globalization. The study is a contribution to the discussion on the forms of world Christianity.*

**Keywords:** Papua New Guinea, christianity, original religions, syncretism, modernization, Transformation of traditions

## Introduction

FOR many long years, Papua New Guinea (PNG) has primarily been seen by the public and by scholarly literature as a region typical for its original Indigenous religions and traditional customs

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related to various local animistic cults. In terms of studying religion and culture, this area is interesting in a number of aspects because it remained isolated for a long period of time, so that the forms of Indigenous religions were preserved in their almost intact form practically until the 1900s in the coastal areas. This is a unique opportunity for religious studies both from historical and comparative perspectives. One can argue that some cultural groups, especially in the inland mountain areas of the island, were isolated from the influences of other cultures (especially from the Western one) until the end of the 1930s, and even longer in some areas.

This partial isolation was primarily given by geographical and environmental conditions that made some regions hard to access—and some remain hard to access even now. This can give the biased impression that the inhabitants of the island remained completely isolated from the influences of other cultures for centuries. The archaeological findings from the northern coast of the island suggest that even centuries ago there were contacts with merchants from other countries of East and Southeast Asia; this having been proven by, for example, the finds of Dong Son bronze objects in the area of Sentani Lake.<sup>1</sup> Although the northern coast of New Guinea island has been exposed to other East Asian cultures, in particular, their influence in the development of cultures within the territory of today's PNG state was not manifested all that much. A radical change was only brought with the spread of Christianity and European colonialism. This article will focus on certain changes that came about as a result of Christianization.

### **Modernization and Christianization of the Region**

There is a certain static perspective that prevails in the study of PNG cultures and religions (traditional Indigenous forms of religion), which falsely consider these religions without their dynamic ongoing development. PNG, similarly to other countries of East and Southeast Asia, poses a unique opportunity to study religious and cultural change. The two strongest factors in the change are Christianization and modernization. After long periods of relative isolation, PNG has undergone a dynamic and—in some aspects—rapid social development in the last decades (or in the course of one century). A unique opportunity opens up to study social and cultural change, almost instantly, so to say: modernization, which was fighting for its place in European countries for several centuries, took place in this region over the course of one century,

<sup>1</sup> Paula Swadling, *Plumes from Paradise* (Port Moresby: Papua New Guinea National Museum, 1996).

and during one generation at its fastest.<sup>2</sup> This rapid change (social, cultural, technological, and obviously also mental) is possible to express through a metaphorical phrase: from a stone axe to a mobile phone. That is: from the “Stone Age” directly to the “Cyber Age.”

In different (non-European) cultural regions, modernization took place differently and with distinct dynamics. China was closed, for example, to Western influences, that is, to modernization, for long periods of time on purpose. Only under the Ching dynasty (in the first half of the nineteenth century) did China begin to open (involuntarily, after the defeat in the Opium Wars) to the Western type of modernization. A similar situation arose in Japan, where modernization began in the Meiji period (since the second half of the nineteenth century), which is considered a significant period in the history of Japan when the country went through transformation from a feudal society to a national state. In India, which was (unlike China and Japan) under British colonial administration for a long time, modernization began earlier and was connected with the introduction of the British administrative system and technologies (for example, by expanding railway transport). The process of modernization has been similar to the one occurring in other parts of Asia, and over time it has become a key part of the world order, being a major factor in global modernization megatrends.<sup>3</sup> “In 2000, Asia accounted for just under one-third of global GDP (in terms of purchasing power parity), and it is on track to top 50 percent by 2040. By that point, it is expected to account for 40 percent of the world’s total consumption. Asia is making not only economic progress but rapid strides in human development, from longer lifespans and greater literacy to a dramatic surge in internet use.”<sup>4</sup>

In the case of Papua New Guinea, the onset of modernization processes is also connected primarily with the colonial period, especially with the period when the eastern part of New Guinea was controlled by Australia (since 1920). During the period of colonial supremacy, the infrastructure and electrification of the administrative centers were built, and the educational system was founded. It was at this time that the transformation process began—from isolated local communities under colonial administration to an independent

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Paul Sillitoe, *Social Change in Melanesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Randall Collins, “An Asian Route to Capitalism: Religious Economy and the Origins of Self-Transforming Growth in Japan,” *American Sociological Review* 62 (1997): 843–65; Giovanni Arrighi, Takeshi Hamashita, and Mark Selden, *The Resurgence of East Asia: 500, 150 and 50 Year Perspectives* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Mark T. Berger, *The Battle for Asia: From Decolonization to Globalization* (Abingdon: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); Peter van der Veer, *The Modern Spirit of Asia: The Spiritual and the Secular in China and India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Rajiv Biswas, *Asian Megatrends* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> McKinsey Global Institute, *Asia’s Future Is Now*, 2019, 3.

state that is based on the idea of one nation.<sup>5</sup> The process of PNG modernization continued after independence in 1975. Urbanization, industrialization, and centralization continued to strengthen,<sup>6</sup> the process of individualization gained its significance.<sup>7</sup> A social structure started to change with the rise of a middle class.<sup>8</sup> A new system of social control began to work. Understanding of the concepts of space and time has been profoundly changed in the consequence of modernization of the country.<sup>9</sup> The implementation of a common language has been an important factor of PNG modernization—*tok pisin* (pidgin English) was officially accepted as a “national” language (there is also Hiri Motu, of course, which has its significance for interethnic communication and understanding). *Tok pisin* helped to overcome the communication barrier caused by the enormous number of different local languages.<sup>10</sup> PNG benefited from rapid economic growth in the 1990s. According to John Connell, “The real growth of the nation’s gross national product (GNP) in 1993, at 16 per cent, was the highest in the nation’s history and one of the highest in the world.”<sup>11</sup>

The speed of modernization and penetration of Western influences are more clearly apparent in the dynamics of Christianization of PNG. Although the first Western explorers arrived in the region in the middle of the sixteenth century (they were rather rare visits), the first Christian missions only began to work at the end of the nineteenth century. Today, that is, about one century later, PNG has certainly become a Christian country: according to the 2011

<sup>5</sup> Compare with Oscar White, *Parliament of Thousands Tribes* (Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill, 1965); Hank Nelson, *Taim Bilong Masta* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1982); Ralph Premdas, “Ethnicity and Nation-Building: Papua New Guinea,” in *Ethnicity and Nation-Building*, ed. Michael Howard, (Tokyo: The United Nations University, 1989), 244–58.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald James May, *State and Society in Papua New Guinea: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Cambera: Australian National University, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Frederick Errington and Deborah Gewertz, “The Individuation of Tradition in a Papua New Guinean Modernity,” *American Anthropologist* 98 (1996): 114–26.

<sup>8</sup> Deborah Gewertz and Frederick Errington, “Sleights of Hand and the Construction of Desire in a Papua New Guinea Modernity,” *Contemporary Pacific* 10 (1998): 345–68; Deborah Gewertz and Frederick Errington, *Emerging Class in Papua New Guinea: The Telling of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Eric Hirsch, “When Was Modernity in Melanesia?” *Social Anthropology* 9 (2001): 131–41; Joel Robbins and Holly Wardlow, eds., *The Making of Global and Local Modernities in Melanesia: Humiliation, Transformation and the Nature of Cultural Change* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2005). Compare with Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. John W. M. Verhaar, ed., *Melanesian Pidgin and Tok Pisin* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1990): vii–xiii.

<sup>11</sup> John Connell, *Papua New Guinea: The Struggle for Development* (London: Routledge, 1997), 1.

census, 96 percent of PNG inhabitants identified as Christian.<sup>12</sup> Another factor that documents the quickly changing society is rapid population growth; in 1980, there were fewer than 3 million inhabitants in PNG, in 2011, this was 7.25 million. We are speaking here about a very young society; the median age of the PNG population was 19.7 in 2000 and 21.4 in 2011.<sup>13</sup>

### History of Melanesia and PNG

The oldest evidence known so far of the presence of human populations on the island of New Guinea dates back 50,000 years.<sup>14</sup> The descendants of the first migration wave continue to live in Melanesia and typically speak Papuan (non-Austronesian) languages. The second important migration wave was connected with the Lapita people who had their origin in Taiwan. Their migration to Melanesia and Polynesia brought not only the spread of Austronesian languages, but these migrants also introduced an entire range of innovations in the area of material culture, especially pottery, production of tapa cloth, and a wide range of work tools made of stone and shell.<sup>15</sup>

A critical turning point in the history of Melanesian inhabitants and cultures was represented, however, by the colonial period. The western part of the New Guinea island became part of the Netherlands in 1828; the eastern part of the island was divided between Germany and Great Britain in 1884, after they agreed on a border between the northern and southern part of the island east of the Dutch colony. Both world powers introduced their own system of colonial administration with a shared goal of civilizing the local inhabitants, which primarily meant their Christianization. This specifically involved eradicating habits that were perceived as a contradiction to the values of Western civilization, that is, cannibalism, intergroup wars, and non-Christian religious cults.<sup>16</sup>

Naturally, as early as the nineteenth century, various Christian denominations showed their interest in Melanesia and successfully established their work in the region. The denominations set up their missions in areas safely under the control of the colonial administration and spread Christian ideas rapidly and successfully among the Indigenous people. It is remarkable that as early as the 1966 census, which was carried out still in the period of Australian

<sup>12</sup> Theo Aerts, *Traditional Religion in Melanesia* (Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea, 1998), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Papua New Guinea, *National Report* (Port Moresby: National Statistical Office, 2015), 12.

<sup>14</sup> Glenn Summerhayes et al., "Human Adaptation and Plant Use in Highland New Guinea 49,000 to 44,000 Years Ago," *Science* 330 (2010): 78–81.

<sup>15</sup> Patrick Kirch, *On the Road of Winds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> John Plunkett Murray, *Papua or British New Guinea* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912); John Waiko, *A Short History of Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne: OUP Australia & New Zealand, 2014).

colonial supremacy, 92 percent of the inhabitants of both territories already identified as Christian.<sup>17</sup> In other words, it took only ninety years of missionary work to get from zero to more than 90 percent; the oldest permanent mission in the territory of today's Papua New Guinea state was established in 1877,<sup>18</sup> when James Chalmers settled on the island.<sup>19</sup>

The diversity and geographical variety of the island landscape certainly influenced the diversity and spreading of forms of Christianity, which undoubtedly dominates the religious map of PNG. In 2011, 96 percent of the inhabitants identified as Christian and 1.4 percent identified with other non-Christian religions. Christianity is greatly internally differentiated here, however, with the largest religious group being Roman Catholic (26 percent), followed by Evangelical Lutheran (18.4 percent), Seventh-Day Adventist (12.9 percent), the Pentecostal movement (10.4 percent), United Church (10.3 percent), other Christians (9.7 percent), Evangelical Alliance (5.9 percent), Anglicans (3.2 percent), Baptists (2.8 percent), the Salvation Army (0.4 percent), and the Kwato Church (0.2 percent). Christianity in PNG is thus greatly varied, and it is impossible to say that a certain denomination dominates strongly. Moreover, the distribution of Christianity differs regionally, for example, in the autonomous region of Bougainville, Roman Catholics dominate with 67 percent, in the province of Morobe, the Evangelical Lutherans prevail with 67 percent, in the Northern Province, the Anglican Church prevails with 68 percent.<sup>20</sup> This differentiation is naturally due to the work of different Christian missions in different regions; there are about 150 missions working in PNG today.<sup>21</sup>

This spatial differentiation of Christianity is a result of efforts to avoid religious strife and potential conflicts among different Christian traditions and churches. For example, the German government during its colonial rule of PNG decided which regions would be administered by Catholic missions and which would be administered by Lutheran missions. The German government did not want to reproduce the tension between these traditions that existed in Germany at the time. This is why, for example, the Roman Catholic Church

<sup>17</sup> Compare, for example, Philip Gibbs, "Papua New Guinea," in *Globalization and the Reshaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*, ed. Manfred Ernst (Suva, Fiji Islands: Pacific Theological College, 2006): 82–158.

<sup>18</sup> The first attempt to Christianize the Indigenous inhabitants in coastal areas took place in 1855. An intensive and systematic effort began in the 1870s. See Hehrmann Mückler, *Mission in Ozeanien* (Vienna: Facultas Verlag, 2009), 82–83.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Maiden, *Missionaries, Headhunters & Colonial Officers* (Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press, 2003).

<sup>20</sup> Papua New Guinea, *National Report*, 2015, 33.

<sup>21</sup> Volker Hauck, Angela Mandie-Filer, and Joe Bolger, *Ringling the Church Bell: The Role of Churches in Governance and Public Performance in Papua New Guinea* (Maastricht: The European Centre for Development Policy Management 2005), 6–11.

prevails in the province of Simbu (where Catholic missionaries came in the middle of the 1930s). The Evangelical Lutheran Church prevails, in contrast, in the Eastern Highlands (where the missionaries had already come at the beginning of the 1920s).

To understand how Christianity was spread in Melanesia and especially in Papua New Guinea, it is important to keep in mind that the inland of the island remained practically unknown for a long time, and there were no Christian missions present. Only during the 1930s was the inland of the island mapped and the inhabitants brought into subjection,<sup>22</sup> this being the beginning of its Christianization.

### Pre-Christian Religious Traditions

Thanks to its geographical variety and fragmentation into a large number of islands and islets, Melanesia is well known for its extraordinary cultural and language diversity. The same also applies to the largest Melanesian island of New Guinea; its jagged surface and difficult accessibility became an accelerator of the development of cultural and language diversity. Additionally, varied forms of religiousness, religious cults, and related rituals developed.

To begin, various forms of an ancestor cult were widely spread. It was described, for example, by Frederik Barth with the Baktaman group from the West Sepik region where a seven-level system of male initiation developed, which derived from the cult of ancestors whose skulls were respectfully kept in places of worship; their support secured success in growing taro and in war conflicts.<sup>23</sup> Similar cults are known from many other Melanesian groups, on the island of Manus,<sup>24</sup> and in the Anga group of New Guinea.<sup>25</sup>

A cult connected to growing plants is known, for example, from the Abelam group in the basin of the Sepik River. The Abelam people depended for survival on growing yams, which played a part in feasts after their harvest. The social status of a man was derived from his ability to grow big yams, with his status being literally measured by the length of grown yams, which could grow from two to three meters; in extreme cases the length might reach up to four meters. The ability to grow long yams stemmed from magic and keeping ritual taboos. The individual villages of Abelam used to invite one another to their feasts. The

<sup>22</sup> Compare, for example, Paula Brown, *Beyond Mountain Valley* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995). See also Eric Schieffelin and Robert Crittenden, eds., *Like People You See in a Dream* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), and Bob Connolly and Robert Anderson, *First Contact* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1988).

<sup>23</sup> Compare with Frederik Barth, *Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Guinea* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975).

<sup>24</sup> Reo Fortune, *Manus Religion* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1935).

<sup>25</sup> Beatrice Blackwood, *The Kukukuku of the Upper Watut* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).



presentation of grown products served not only as a competition among men, but among villages as well.<sup>26</sup> The Abelam people used to decorate yams for the feasts so that they looked like human beings; they used basketry masks called *baba* and other types of yam masks for this purpose.<sup>27</sup>

Male cults from many parts of Melanesia are also known. Typically, this was, for example, East Sepik, where the male cult was connected with the *tambaran* house, which represented the religious and social center of the community. This is still evident at present, as the authors have observed: men meet up in half-ruined men's houses that no longer fulfill religious functions. In men's houses (*haus tambaran*) important rituals took place, sacred objects were kept there, and important decisions related to the life of community were made. Only fully initiated men would enter the houses. In the Iatmul group, for example, men had to undergo a painful ritual when their skin was scarified in order to resemble crocodile skin, as observed by, for example, Bateson in the village of Kankanamum.<sup>28</sup> The skin scarification qualified a man to enter the *haus tambaran*.

The cult of sacred flutes was spread in many areas not only in New Guinea, but also on the Bismarck Islands.<sup>29</sup> A typical example of the cult was described by Ian Hogbin on Vokeo Island, where the cult was connected with spirits of the forest and of the village. There were always two flutes, one called a man, the other a woman. Men always played them in pairs—one man walking forward and the other one walking backward. When the flutes wore out, the village chief had to set out on a journey to find a replacement so that their voice sounded the same. This cult, tied with an initiation system, was supposed to teach men how to handle ritual pollution (*rekareka*), which had been accumulating in them by daily-life contact between men and women. In their adulthood, men had to practice what they called male menstruation in order to get rid of the ritual pollution.<sup>30</sup> In other cultures, the cult of sacred flutes was connected with ritualized homosexuality, while elsewhere it was closely connected to the male cult without homosexual attributes.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Godfried Johan Gerrits, *The Haus Tambaran of Bongiora* (Lugano: Museo delle Culture di Lugano, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Compare with Eric Kjellgren, *Oceania* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007), 65–66.

<sup>28</sup> Gregory Bateson, *Naven* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958).

<sup>29</sup> K. A. Gourlay, *Sound-Producing Instruments in Traditional Society* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1975).

<sup>30</sup> Ian Hogbin, *The Island of Menstruating Men* (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1970).

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Gilbert H. Herdt, *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).



It is important to understand the particular types of cults as theoretical abstractions because it does not mean that, for example, the harvest cult was not interconnected with the male cult. These cults were mingling at various places. Although the pre-Christian religious traditions were quite diverse, it is possible to identify several common elements in this diversity, as Mantovani tried to prove. One of those elements is the unity or connection of the visible empirical world and the invisible non-empirical world—both worlds, which are separated in European traditions, penetrate the other.<sup>32</sup> In the imaginary center of the universe stand people, while the world is coinhabited by the dead, animals, forests, mountains, and so forth, but also by the spirits of animals and plants.

The basis of everything and the central value of original Melanesian religions is “Life,” as a transpersonal power that pervades the entire universe. Ennio Mantovani characterized Melanesian religions as “biocosmic” because in them everything in the world at a certain level and with a certain power participates in “Life.”<sup>33</sup> All activities of people thus are, or should be, aimed at protection, sustainability, and celebration of “Life,” and there are two basic ways that lead to this goal. The first is maintaining right relationships between people and spirits, which is primarily helped by practicing rituals. The second way is an accumulation of movable wealth, that is, mainly ownership of pigs and various types of valuables.<sup>34</sup>

The religious basis of the essence of “Life” is well expressed by the Melanesian concept of *mana*, which was introduced to Western literature by the missionary Robert Henry Codrington. He defined it as a supernatural power that things, minerals, plants, animals, and also people are endowed with in a certain measure. Codrington says on the topic: “The Melanesian mind is entirely possessed by the belief in a supernatural power or influence, called almost universally *mana*. This is what works to effect everything which is beyond the ordinary power of men, outside the common processes of nature; it is present in the atmosphere of life, attaches itself to persons and to things, and is manifested by results which can only be ascribed to its operation.”<sup>35</sup> According to Codrington, Melanesians believe that *mana* can induce both good and evil effects, thus it is good to have such a force at one’s disposal and control it at the same time. *Mana*, however, is not necessarily permanently present in objects. In other words, success and power depend

<sup>32</sup> Ennio Mantovani, *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions* (Goroka: The Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Socio-Economic Service, 1995).

<sup>33</sup> Mantovani, *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions*, 31.

<sup>34</sup> Mantovani, *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions*, 93.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Codrington, *The Melanesians* (New York: Dover Publications, 1891), 118–19.

on the presence of *mana*. For example, *mana* influences a hunter's successes. A hunter can have *mana*, or he can use weapons that are loaded with *mana*, and so on. In other words, success and power depend on the presence of *mana* in people and objects. According to the same author, *mana* may take on, however, personified forms, and we then speak about a belief in the existence of spirits of places, animals, or plants.<sup>36</sup>

Robert Ranulph Marett, one of the most significant representatives of the anthropology of religion, called animatism an elementary form of religion, and according to him *mana* is an example of such religion.<sup>37</sup> He differentiated between animatism (also pre-animism) and animism, which was created as a theoretical concept by the British social anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor.<sup>38</sup> He understood animism as the first form of religion, with monotheism being only its developed form. Personification of supernatural powers as spirits represents a rational concept and therefore cannot be considered the first form of religion, Marett claimed.<sup>39</sup> Numerous studies show that in PNG many worldviews can be found that meet the definition of animatism—a belief in transpersonal force, which is in a certain measure given to people, animals, plants, and inanimate things, and which can be mastered and controlled by people through certain means.<sup>40</sup> The most powerful form of animatism is undoubtedly sorcery. Nevertheless, in PNG we meet both animatism and animism, that is, a belief in the existence of transpersonal personified forces.

Another common feature of precolonial Melanesian religions is a belief in the spirits of the dead, which is transformed in many cases into the ancestor cult that anthropologists have observed in many Melanesian cultures.<sup>41</sup> When the first expeditions entered the Highlands of New Guinea at the turn of the 1930s, the people from the mountain culture groups viewed the visitors as the returning spirits of the dead. Over the period 1930–1935, a gold prospector, Mick Leahy, was with his brothers, representatives of the colonial administration and of a gold mining company; they were systematically exploring the inland mountains of New Guinea. Much to everyone's surprise, the explorers found out that the mountains were not empty but inhabited by

<sup>36</sup> Codrington, *The Melanesians*, 119–21.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Marett, *The Threshold of Religion* (London: Methuen, 1909), 135.

<sup>38</sup> Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London: John Murray, 1871).

<sup>39</sup> Marett, *The Threshold of Religion*, 137.

<sup>40</sup> Jan van Baal, *Symbols for Communication* (Asean: Van Gorcum, 1971), 65.

<sup>41</sup> Reo Fortune, *Sorcerers of Dobu* (London: George Routledge, 1932). See also Peter Lawrence and Mervyn Meggitt, eds., *Gods, Ghosts and Men in Melanesia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965), 58.

large human populations that had not seen white people yet.<sup>42</sup> The members of the populations thought that they were the only people in the world because the world ended behind the horizon of the mountains. Therefore, the explorers were unexpected guests, and the Indigenous cognitive models developed an explanation according to their own worldviews—they were spirits of the dead who had come back to their people or they were spirits from the beginning of the world. Some natives even began to recognize their particular relatives in the newcomers.<sup>43</sup> The mountain people often expected support in local war conflicts and an increase in prosperity and property from the spirits of the dead. They brought them gifts and food. After the unexpected visitors left, the natives collected everything that the visitors had left behind: cigarette butts, the remains of matches, toilet paper, simply anything that could be collected and used for sorcery and other rituals.<sup>44</sup> In summary, in local religious concepts, the world is inhabited by animals, plants, people, and spirits and is pervaded by a transpersonal force that makes possible the prosperity of “Life.”

### **Christianization—Repression, Coexistence, or Syncretism?**

The unsubstantiated assumption that over time Christianity replaced original Papua New Guinean religious cults and religious concepts can frequently be found in the relevant scholarly literature. John Barker called this opinion the “theory of missionization.”<sup>45</sup> The premise is the statement that Christian missionaries caused the complete extinction of local religious forms through their activities. It was not theorized at all that Papua New Guinean inhabitants could creatively reinterpret Christian ideas and concepts and introduce them into the context and conditions of local cultures. Christianity in PNG was spread not only by Western missionaries but also by converts of Papua New Guinean origin who often worked in the remotest areas. This is why they could spread their interpretation of Christianity without control from higher authorities. This often led to adjusting Christian ideas to local conditions.<sup>46</sup> There is no doubt that pure missionization did not occur, this

<sup>42</sup> History of New Guinea Highlands exploration is extensively described in James Sinclair, *The Middle Kingdom* (Adelaide: Crawford Publishing, 2016).

<sup>43</sup> Schieffelin and Crittenden, *Like People You See in a Dream*. See also Connolly and Anderson, *First Contact*, 93; Michael Leahy, *Explorations into Highland New Guinea* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1991), 8.

<sup>44</sup> Connolly and Anderson, *First Contact*, 55.

<sup>45</sup> John Barker, “Christianity in Western Melanesia Ethnography,” in *History and Tradition in Melanesian Anthropology*, ed. James Carrier (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 148.

<sup>46</sup> Barker, “Christianity in Western Melanesia Ethnography,” 153–55.

having been proven by many religious concepts that are a syncretism of original religions and Christianity such as, for example, cargo cults.<sup>47</sup> This is evident in the production of storyboards from East Sepik, whose authors combine Christian motifs with elements of original religious concepts and habits.<sup>48</sup>

In this article we will focus on some of the important types of impact Christianity had on the original traditions. There are at least four types of such impact: a) repression of the original traditions and absolute dominance of Christianity (the article will not deal with this type, but it can be easily documented); b) unsuccessful repression and parallel existence; c) coexistence and unsuccessful Christianization; d) syncretism. We will show the last three types mentioned in the areas where they primarily occurred, although it is evident that these areas intermingle and affect one another; that is, on the level of the doctrinal interpretation and on the level of the everyday life of an individual. We would like to demonstrate one of the types where neither the repression of original traditions nor their syncretism took place. There are areas where Christianity and original traditions clash sharply and where Christianity did not succeed in repressing the original teachings and practices. A typical example is sorcery.

### Syncretism on the Level of Doctrine

The term “syncretism” is understood by us neutrally in the tradition of cultural anthropology or religious studies as a natural consequence of the meeting and mutual influence of different traditions, including religion. It is a situation in which an element or part of one cultural system becomes an element and integral part of the system of another.<sup>49</sup> Syncretism in this perspective is a natural part of the history of religion. This statement was further expanded by Regina Knapp, who studied religious syncretism in the PNG group of Bene: “Culture can be understood as the processual and continuous synthesis of different elements and categories (and their meanings) that encounter and interact with each other, acquire a new functional value that again affects other related categories, and leads to transformations in their meanings, use, and structure.”<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> See, mainly, Peter Lawrence, *Road Belong Cargo* (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1989), or Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound* (London: Palatin, 1970).

<sup>48</sup> Compare with Martin Soukup and Dušan Lužný, “The Story of Storyboards from East Sepik, Papua New Guinea,” *Annals of the Náprstek Museum* 40 (2019): 59–74.

<sup>49</sup> For example, William H. Harrison, *In Praise of Mixed Religion: The Syncretism Solution in a Multifaith World* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), xiv.

<sup>50</sup> Regina Knapp, *Culture Change and Ex-Change: Syncretism and Anti-Syncretism in Bena, Eastern Highlands, Papua New Guinea* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 9.

A good example of PNG inhabitants' worldview involving syncretism of Christian doctrine and traditional religions involves the concepts of the Wanang<sup>51</sup> community inhabiting the tropical forests in Madang Province. People from the Wanang community call themselves Gali (*galisakang, sakang* meaning "a clan" in their language). Their relationship to what we call nature was framed by an imaginary triangle—its vertices being the clan system, land ownership, and nature spirits. Each clan had a sacred and at the same time a taboo place on their lands, which is inhabited by spirits. These places were taboo; they could not be visited and could not be farmed. Wanang people believed that if someone breaks the taboo, they can put in danger not only their own health or even life, but also life in the surrounding environment because these places are inhabited by spirits that are connected with the spirits of all the animals and plants of the territory. Sacred places were considered important for maintaining the entire universe.

Wanang people believed that everything in the world has its spirit. When an animal is killed or a tree is cut down, their spirit needs to move elsewhere. This is done by the spirits that live in the sacred place and are connected with all other spirits in the territory under their control. Therefore, the villagers claimed, it is impossible to sell or mine the sacred places or make gardens there. This would lead to the destruction of the place, and then nothing would be left to direct the transition of the spirits. This would finally lead to a collapse of the universe as a whole. The religious concepts of the people in Wanang were also influenced by Christianity, although no active church or mission works in the village at present. They explained their origin in agreement with the tradition of the Bible. After the fall of the Tower of Babel, God entrusted the areas around Wanang to Gali people and gave them their language and the names of sacred spirits.

Another example of a connection between pre-Christian tradition and Christian teaching is syncretism, which takes place at the level of an individual or a group. Our example is Tau—a man from the Bena group in the Eastern Highlands. Tau was an educated man who chose farming to make his living. He was active in his church (of an Evangelical form) and attended services on a regular basis. From the perspective of his Indigenous tradition, he was a warrior, which in practice meant attacking members of other groups in a very aggressive way and fighting against them systematically. Christianity enabled him to keep the original cognitive structure (corresponding to his social status) and connect it with the cognitive structure of Christianity. Both structures are based on a strict differentiation between good and evil; in Christianity the evil

<sup>51</sup> The knowledge of this cultural group was obtained by one of the authors of this study during field research.

is understood to be Satan, whose power has to be fought against at all times. This is also the reason why Tau participated in “crusades” in his surroundings, that is, in an active fight against evil and against people who were connected to evil. He is convinced that whenever he fought, God was on his side. This warrior accepted Christian values such as honesty, dignity, truthfulness and, above all, discipline. He believed in the power of God and sees himself as a warrior for right values.

The Old Testament “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” served as a legitimization for his struggle. “Tau saw the fighting of evil forces as part of his obligation to God and to the community and was therefore also supportive of *sanguma* witch hunts.”<sup>52</sup> *Sanguma* (in pidgin English “sorcery”) stands for evil in all its forms, an evil power that is able to possess people. Members of the cultural group (and Tau as well) used the original word “*sanguma*” for denoting the Christian concept of evil, but he also uses the word “*huma*” for God, which is the name of the original progenitor and founder of the Bena family.

### Coexistence on the Level of Family Life and Sex

Family, kinship, and ways to maintain the continuity of a family (or a clan) are areas that play a principal role in the life of individuals. The question that is interesting for us, within the context of our article, is if and how Christianity affected forms of family living together and attitudes toward biological reproduction. Here we rely on the sociological-anthropological survey that was carried out in Melanesia thanks to the work of the Melanesian Institute (an organization that actively strives for Christianization but is also involved in religious studies). The research was carried out in the end of 1980s and was supposed to find out about attitudes related to marriage, partners, and sexual life. There were 1,325 respondents in the survey from thirty-one communities from different parts of Melanesia. The research results unquestionably indicated that Christianity significantly affected attitudes toward the stated thematic areas. The influence of Christian ideas did not simply cause pre-Christian habits, norms, and values to disappear. It led both to their disappearance and to their maintenance and transformation. In our overview, we will deal only with select topics of the research findings: entering a Christian marriage; attitudes toward polygamy, divorce, and sexuality;<sup>53</sup> and in some cases we will supplement them with information that we acquired from our own informants.

<sup>52</sup> Knapp, *Culture Change and Ex-Change*, 244.

<sup>53</sup> For detailed research results, see Ennio Mantovani, *Marriage in Melanesia: An Anthropological Perspective* (Goroka: Melanesian Institute, 1992).

Papua New Guinea declares itself to be a Christian state in its constitution, which maintains the noble traditions of their ancestors. In this respect, typical examples include opinions on the nature of a “Christian marriage.” Respondents stated that the precondition to enter a Christian marriage is to be a Christian and to go through relevant rituals, which are established for entering such a marriage. Most respondents further stated that marriages are arranged and do not presume love between the future husband and wife.<sup>54</sup> The fact is that this research was carried out as long as three decades ago and since then different comparable research has not been executed. Nevertheless, this state was described by informants in the community of Wanang (Madang Province), as well as in the village of Kegelsuglo (Simbu Province), and in the village of Yawan (Morobe Province). The boy and the girl might develop a mutual affection, but entering marriage is partly a decision of their parents and especially of the chiefs of the clans involved.

According to the respondents of the survey, the goal of a marriage is to generate offspring. If a marriage remains childless, only a minimum of the respondents said that the married couple should remain in wedlock. A significant number of respondents (almost 50 percent) stated that another woman should enter the marriage (polygyny) or the couple should get divorced (35 percent). More than 40 percent of respondents gave adoption as an appropriate option.<sup>55</sup> According to the informants (most of them Protestants) from our fieldwork, in Kegelsuglo and Yawan villages adoption is quite common among close friends but is subject mainly to the consent of the mother. Moreover, discrepancies appear in attitudes toward polygamy, on the one hand, and in attitudes toward divorce, on the other. When respondents stated that an appropriate solution would be to marry another woman, that anticipates either a divorce or entering a polygynous marriage. However, divorce is not frequent. In the genealogical data reconstructed in Yawan village in 2015, for example, there was only one case of divorce.

The results of the sociological survey suggest that many respondents interpret polygamy as being unacceptable; they stated that polygamy is in conflict with Christian ideas (men 23 percent, women 22 percent), and alternatively they saw complications caused by jealousy between women (men 16 percent, women 28 percent). Dissenting attitudes were stated both by women (90 percent) and expressed by men (70 percent). If the respondents thought polygamy to be non-problematic, it was only under the condition that the husband cannot provide all his wives with their own houses. Respondents stated that the

<sup>54</sup> Mantovani, *Marriage in Melanesia*, 34.

<sup>55</sup> Mantovani, *Marriage in Melanesia*, 167.



reason for entering a polygynous marriage, apart from childlessness, is its prestige and effective provision for the family; it brings greater sexual contentment as well.<sup>56</sup> Polygyny is quite common in Papua New Guinea; one of the authors encountered polygyny in the villages of Wanang, Yawan, and Keglsuglo.<sup>57</sup>

Different attitudes also occur in the question of divorce, which was not traditionally frequent, but was not unthinkable either.<sup>58</sup> In the pre-Christian era, childlessness used to be one of the main causes of divorce. The second main reason was domestic violence against women, which still remains one of the major social problems of today's state. The main safety measure against divorce was compensation for the bride, which used to be a common tradition in Melanesia.<sup>59</sup> The basis of the tradition is the transfer of wealth (most frequently these include pigs and various types of valuables) in an amount that had been previously agreed on by the family of the bride; this compensates for her leaving her family group. It is especially compensation for the bride's ability to give birth, which now shifts to the benefit of a different kin group. In some cases, the compensation also included services provided to the benefit of the other kin group. The size of the compensation used to be to an extent that normally exceeded the possibilities of an individual, and therefore the wider kin group contributed to it; the relatives of the bride then redistributed the compensation among themselves based on a certain system.<sup>60</sup> This is why it was so difficult to divorce a married couple because it was very complicated to return the compensation. It is common in the Kegelsuglo community that in case of a divorce at the man's initiative, no compensation is given back. If the divorce takes place based at the woman's instigation, however, the man is eligible for part of the bride-wealth. A similar approach is taken everywhere in Melanesia.<sup>61</sup> The overall majority of respondents to the survey said that it was possible to carry out divorce only when the marriage remained childless, when the couple was not able to live together or they did not fulfill their duties together.<sup>62</sup> Respondents stated two main reasons why a marriage should remain inseparable. The first reason is important only for Roman Catholics because it is in conflict with Roman Catholic canon law.

<sup>56</sup> Mantovani, *Marriage in Melanesia*, 192–95.

<sup>57</sup> The authors of this study do not have enough evidence to compare with other regions, such as those dominated by Catholic missions, where the situation may be different.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Sillitoe, *An Introduction to the Anthropology of Melanesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 144.

<sup>59</sup> Sillitoe, *An Introduction to the Anthropology of Melanesia*, 144.

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Brown, *Beyond Mountain Valley*.

<sup>61</sup> Sillitoe, *Introduction to the Anthropology of Melanesia*, 144.

<sup>62</sup> Mantovani, *Marriage in Melanesia*, 214.

As the second reason, they stated that it disharmonizes traditional habits, especially connected with the compensation for the bride.<sup>63</sup>

Also of interest are attitudes toward the questions of birth control. Most frequently respondents stated that good ways to support conception were various potions, baths, and magic spells. In other words, the respondents admitted to using traditional means to boost conception. With respect to the fact that the stated purpose of marriage is children, contraceptive means do not have their place in birth control. Condoms are not, for example, usually a standard part of the product range in PNG shops. Sexual abstinence is an acceptable method of birth control, and it is required under certain circumstances. Respondents stated that sexual abstinence is in the first place required during the period after a child is born and during menstruation.<sup>64</sup> Sexual abstinence after a child is born lasts between one to three years. The reason is given that it is either dangerous for the mother and the child, or for the father. Sexual taboo during the menstruation period is justified in various ways. Respondents mainly stated that it is dangerous for the man, the garden, and the livestock. Taboos related to menstruation are typical especially for regions in the New Guinea Highlands.<sup>65</sup> In summary, one can say that, according to the survey results, the impact of Christianity on attitudes toward sexuality is insignificant.<sup>66</sup>

### **A Parallel Existence—An Unsuccessful Fight against Sorcery**

For a long time, various forms of Christianity and traditional religious beliefs and cults coexisted within the territories of Papua New Guinea. Under the influence of Christianity, however, the traditional beliefs and cults gradually changed or completely ceased to exist. The authors observed such a situation in East Sepik, where harvest cults and cults of men still used to have their place in the 1970s, while today only their residuals can be observed. Nevertheless, there also exist original concepts and practices that remain despite the dominance of Christianity. Probably the most powerful practice of this kind is sorcery (or a belief in its existence and effects), which still continues to have its influence, in spite of long-term intensive work of the then-colonial officials, today's state administration, and missionaries who have unsuccessfully tried to eradicate this belief.<sup>67</sup> It is worth noting that the Sorcery Law

<sup>63</sup> Mantovani, *Marriage in Melanesia*, 212.

<sup>64</sup> Mantovani, *Marriage in Melanesia*, 126.

<sup>65</sup> See Paul Sillitoe, "Man-Eating Women: Fears of Sexual Pollution in the Papua New Guinea Highlands," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 88 (1978): 77–97.

<sup>66</sup> Mantovani, *Marriage in Melanesia*, 123–24.

<sup>67</sup> Ravunamu Auka, Barbara Gore, and Rebecca Pealiwan, "Sorcery- and Witchcraft-Related Killings in Papua New Guinea: The Criminal Justice System Response," in *Talking*

(274/1971) was part of the state legal system until 2013 when it came out of force. This law distinguished between “black” and “white” magic. In the first case, the magic served to send an illness or even to kill person, while in the second case it served to heal, ensuring a good catch or fortune-telling. Practicing black magic was prohibited by law, and in case of violating the law strict punishments of imprisonment were set. We are aware that there is an extensive debate in anthropology about witchcraft, sorcery, and magic, including in relation to Melanesia. Unfortunately, there is not space in this article for a detailed discussion.<sup>68</sup>

Sorcery represents an important interpretative framework for unexpected events in the life of local communities. Magic serves as an explanation for any adverse event that affects people—an illness, death, or accident. This was common in many cultures, however, as documented, for example, in the study of African Azande people that was published by Evans-Pritchard.<sup>69</sup> Several examples from our field research of the Nungon group in the Morobe Province can be cited. An explanation of every adverse event that happens in the life of a community is sought in magic. At the end of 2009, a plane of Kiunga Aviation crashed. This airline connected Lae and the villages in the mountain part of the province. Only the Australian pilot survived the crash, while the passengers who belonged to one Papua New Guinean family died. The explanation is simple—a sorcerer sent a spell that was supposed to kill them all, therefore only the pilot survived. A similar explanation was applied by the Nungon people to the poor health condition of a young man, whom unknown attackers tried to kill with weapons in the bush, and because they failed, placed a fatal spell upon him. According to what the local people said, the young man had no chance to survive as the spell had already begun to dissolve his internal organs. Nevertheless, Nungon people also practiced white magic, especially in order to heal, or hunting magic, which was supposed to ensure a hunter’s success.

Even the first missionaries who worked in the region were already informed about sorcery.<sup>70</sup> A government anthropologist, Edgar Francis Williams, paid attention to sorcery when carrying out research into the Orokaiva people in the North Territory. The author interpreted Orokaiva magic from the perspective of a government anthropologist and referred to it as a set of opinions that

*It Through: Responses to Sorcery and Witchcraft Beliefs and Practices in Melanesia*, ed. Miranda Forsyth and Richard Eves (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2015), 241–54.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example Stephen Michele, ed., *Sorcerer and Witch in Melanesia* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

<sup>69</sup> See Edward Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937).

<sup>70</sup> Compare with Codrington, *The Melanesians*.

were incompatible with civilization of the twentieth century. He also claimed that it was impossible to separate magic from the Orokaiva society as an independent domain because magic was a worldview for local people; everything they did was a magical action to them, even if it was leaving a piece of leaf in a prepared hole for taro seeding.<sup>71</sup> From the position of a government anthropologist, Williams published educational articles on the pages of *The Papuan Villager* magazine, where he instructed PNG inhabitants in the harmfulness of the belief in magic and its practice. From the perspective of the theory of religion, it is possible to divide Papua New Guinean magic according to James George Frazer's concept of sympathetic magic: contagious and homeopathic.<sup>72</sup> In the first case, the sorcery is based on the principle that objects that were at least shortly in mutual physical contact keep their mutual bond. Therefore, if you influence one of them, you influence the other as well. Homeopathic magic works with the principle that similar causes similar. It is then sufficient to imitate a phenomenon in order to induce it. In PNG magic we can observe both principles.

The principle of contagious magic was involved in at least some cases practiced by the islanders of Tewara and Dobu. According to Fortune's findings, the islanders used magic to achieve success in plant growing and in sexual relationships; further they turned to it in case of participation in the *kula*. The basic means to achieve the goal were magical formulas that were guarded by men. The formulas were not always enough, however, because in some cases the sorcerers needed to obtain everything that somehow came into direct physical contact with the person who was supposed to become the object of the sorcerer's actions. This typically included either magical attack or divination.<sup>73</sup> Sorcerers in the Siane group worked in a similar way; they packed the obtained remains in a leaf and burned it in order to cause pain.<sup>74</sup> One of the coauthors observed magic based on the principle of similarity in the Keglsuglo community (Simbu Province) where a magical ritual to ward off rain took place. The core of the ritual lay in the evaporation of a liquid on a hot stone that should imitate forcing clouds away.

Papua New Guineans have mostly ambivalent feelings toward sorcery. On the one hand, they interpret it as extremely dangerous; it can cause illness, death, an accident, or perhaps a low harvest—because it is possible to use magical means to lure the harvest away and let it go to the sorcerer's crop.

<sup>71</sup> See Francis Williams, *Orokaiva Magic* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1928).

<sup>72</sup> James George Frazer, *Golden Bough* (London: MacMillan, 1890).

<sup>73</sup> Fortune, *Sorcerers of Dobu*, 154, 167.

<sup>74</sup> Richard Salisbury, "The Siane of the Eastern Highlands," in *Gods, Ghosts and Men in Melanesia*, 58.

On the other hand, the services of those who work with magic are very often sought out because they can help with healing or, with the help of an oracle, with finding out who is behind a magical attack. In summary, magic ranks among the important social issues of the country—if someone is suspected or even accused and convicted of sorcery, it leads to his pursuit by the community. On numerous occasions, this ends in atrocious torture and killing. Every year there are tens of people who become victims of “sorcerer-hunting,” and naturally these are only the reported cases; most likely there are many more unfortunate and never reported incidents of this kind within the territory of Papua New Guinea. Only some of them appear in court, however, and even fewer are punished by law. Between 1980 and 2012, a punishment was imposed in only twenty-four cases,<sup>75</sup> although such cases of sorcery-related violence occur quite frequently.

Sorcery was the object of critique of missionaries across various denominations working in Melanesia, including PNG. Their motives were similar to those of the colonial officials—to eradicate sorcery and replace it with a new worldview. Missionaries interpreted sorcery as the devil’s work and tried to eradicate it. Attitudes of missionaries toward some cultural elements such as, for example, polygamy, cannibalism, head hunting, infanticide, and so on differed significantly and manifested different levels of tolerance. Sorcery was universally rejected, however.<sup>76</sup> When fighting against sorcery, the missionaries chose and still choose various strategies—especially prayer, education, destroying artifacts related to sorcery, and stigmatizing male and female sorcerers in communities. Some missionaries interpreted sorcery as being possessed by the devil and applied exorcism techniques.<sup>77</sup>

Sorcery and Christianity are two different cognitive worlds. Papua New Guineans use sorcery to explain all the adverse events that happen; but at the same time, as Christians, they should interpret all adverse events as the (direct or indirect) result of God’s will (although there may be an option for human decision-making).<sup>78</sup> In their premises, however, Christianity and witchcraft are in opposition. On the other hand, however, Melanesians often interpret Christian rituals as blessing, consecration, christening, prayer, and so on as techniques of sorcery.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, these are two various cognitive

<sup>75</sup> See Auka, Gore, and Pealiwan, “Sorcery- and Witchcraft-Related Killings in Papua New Guinea,” 246.

<sup>76</sup> Franco Zocca and Jack Urame, *Sorcery, Witchcraft and Christianity in Melanesia* (Goroka: The Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Socio-Economic Service, 2008), 22.

<sup>77</sup> Zocca and Urame, *Sorcery, Witchcraft and Christianity in Melanesia*, 44.

<sup>78</sup> Zocca and Urame, *Sorcery, Witchcraft and Christianity in Melanesia*, 33.

<sup>79</sup> Zocca and Urame, *Sorcery, Witchcraft and Christianity in Melanesia*, 45.

tools and their uses do not exclude each other, or more precisely, their uses are independent of each other.

### Conclusion—Cultures and Globalization

Specific examples of practice in this article show that there is a need to reject a simplifying view of Christianization and globalization as processes that necessarily lead to cultural unification. Christianization does not necessarily have to lead to the extinction of original religious traditions, although this can obviously take place, or it can seem so. The East Sepik in Papua New Guinea provide an example where traditional men's houses—*haus tambaran*—were destroyed and some traditions were abandoned; nevertheless, as a consequence, the original tradition was reconstructed and new artifacts were created, such as the so-called storyboards, which continue to use the visual elements from *haus tambarans*.<sup>80</sup>

Globalization has also its second side—that is localization. As pointed out by Roland Robertson, globalization and glocalization create one whole and should be studied as such.<sup>81</sup> Globalization leads to revitalization of the local, which can take the form of conservative preservation of traditions as well as creating new traditions. It would be a mistake to see the local and the traditional statically and thus expect that over the course of time no changes would take place in traditions and culture in general. Marshall Sahlins demonstrated this in regard to Hawaiian history. As he has stated: “Hawaiian history is surely not unique in the demonstration that culture functions as a synthesis of stability and change, past and present, diachrony and synchrony.”<sup>82</sup> PNG (like other regions) is another example of the synthesis and coexistence (including creative co-influence) of different cultural and religious traditions, both in doctrine and practice. It is an example of long-term cultural change that is still relevant today.

Studying the religious and cultural change that takes place in Papua New Guinea as a result of Christianization, globalization, and modernization can surprisingly show that beneath the seeming dominance of Christianity a revitalization or innovative transformation of original religions can take place. Accepting and adapting Christian ideas, values, and ways of conduct can be for pragmatic reasons connected to traditional religious concepts and used in a new reconfiguration. In the postcolonial situation, and at a time of the

<sup>80</sup> Soukup and Lužný, “The Story of Storyboards from East Sepik, Papua New Guinea,” 62.

<sup>81</sup> Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1992).

<sup>82</sup> Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 144.

formation of new national identities (and states) in various regions of the world (including PNG), there is a revival of the cultural heritage and pre-colonial (and therefore pre-Christian) cultural and religious traditions of the Indigenous peoples. Part of this process includes a rejection of the dominance of Christianity and a preference for Indigenous traditions. This is a legitimate demand, but it requires strong and distinctive actors (whether in the form of communities, NGOs, political actors, religious groups and organizations, or prominent personalities). In the case of PNG, efforts to strengthen Indigenous cultural (and religious) traditions have manifested themselves in, for example, the use of traditional (pre-Christian) elements or motifs in tools that reinforce collective (national) identity, such as banknotes, national and regional symbols, memory institutions (such as the National Museum, whose exhibition is based on pre-Christian traditions and completely lacks the presence of Christianity) or architecture (for example, the front of the Parliament building is shaped like the front of a *haus tambaran*).

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