

Local Control on Santo and Tanna  
and Preindependence Political Trouble  
in Vanuatu

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The 1980 troubles in Vanuatu that occurred both before and after independence were the result of local social movements opposing outside control of any kind. This will be made clear in a preliminary discussion of the histories of the Nagriamel movement on Espiritu Santo, where most of the trouble occurred, and of the John Frum (Frum <sup>h</sup>rhymes with 'broom') movement on Tanna, where the first casualties of the fighting occurred. This preliminary discussion will also include a discussion of the 1975 general election and will lead into discussions of the 1979 general election and the subsequent events up to <sup>u</sup>August 1980, when Jimmy Stevens surrendered on Santo. ~~A~~concluding section brings events up to 1983. As will be seen, the outside American influences thought to have played a major role, did, in fact, only play a subordinate one.

#### The Nagriamel Movement on Santo, 1960-1976.

Traditional symbols form the basis of the Nagri<sup>am</sup>amel movement. Chief Paul Buluk and about fifty other bushmen moved out of the bush onto land owned by a Frenchman in 1960 (Plant 1977: 35-36), although Shears (1980: 33) gives it as 1963. This settlement on undeveloped agricultural<sup>t</sup> land said to belong to Chief Buluk (but one reporter claims the real landowner is one Thomas of Shark Bay (Tam Tam, 13 June 1981, 10).), marked the origin of Fanafo village (also spelled Vanafo, Tanafo, and Benambo). By the end of the first year between 300 and 400 people had moved in and had agreed to five-year leases to develop the land they were given (Plant 1977: 37). At this time, the group called itself "Namele" after the leaf that Jimmy Stevens called "our taboo, our law, our custom". Stevens joined the movement at the request of the leaders three years later.

According to Stevens, the bush people asked him to show them how they could <sup>re</sup>claim their land, much of which had already been alienated by French companies and individuals. He was appointed a small chief in 1963 and won the annual 15 January elections, in which voting is done with nagria and namele leaves (these are two species of palm tree). The movement was renamed Nagriamel <sup>and</sup> ~~an~~ declared its main aims to be retrieving land, repatriating people to their traditional homelands, and fixing ancestral boundaries (Plant 1977: 36).

A headquarters was established at Fanafo and run by Chief Buluk. Subsequently, four small centers were set up at Nduindui, Aoba Island; Waluriki, Aoba; Longana and Maewo Island. An internal administration evolved. There<sup>n</sup> was an upper council of four offices -- Chief President, Village Rule, Custom Affairs and Foreign Affairs -- and a lower council of ten custom chiefs from different islands (Plant 1977: 37). Each island group was given its own gardens, and the representative chiefs of each group attended regular meetings, usually presided over by Stevens (Tam Tam, 4 October 1980, 11).

As Fanafo grew, Stevens and others<sup>e</sup> began to squat on undeveloped land, the "ol dak bus", owned by Frenchmen. But during 1967, by which time he claimed to have gotten back around 1000 ha<sup>s</sup> of land, Stevens was arrested for criminal trespass (British Newsletter, 15 March 1968, p 8); with the help<sup>of</sup> a Fijian law firm, Stevens and Chief Buluk had their initial sentences reduced to two months and four months respectively. They were taken into custody on 23 March 1968 and brought to Port Vila to serve out their sentences (British Newsletter, 15 March 1968, p 8, and 1 April 1968, p 4).

Despite his statement that "We should get together and build it up, build up our gardens to feed all of our people" (Plant 1977: 38), Stevens was soon associating with K.C. Ramrakha, an Indo-Fijian lawyer, and Andre Leconte, a New Caledonian-French businessman, to develop bushland and buy crops raised by the Nagriamel people. In addition, he asked Fanafo villagers to pay taxes in return for his help in economic development (Plant 1977: 32; Tam Tam, 4 October 1980, p 11).

After they had served their sentences, Stevens and Buluk began to widen their activities beyond their land reclamation efforts, probably out of revenge for their jail sentences. They first attracted the attention of the two Resident Commissioners in 1968, when the RCs mentioned the Nagriamel movement in their opening speech to the 16th session of the Advisory Council, which had been set up in 1957 and consisted of two delegates from each administrative district, at the end of 1968. At that time, they hoped that the leaders of the movement would cooperate with condominium authorities.

But only a year later, at the 18th session, some members were reporting the Nagriamel leaders as urging the people not to join local government councils, to send their children to British schools, or to use medical services provided by the authorities. In parts of Ambrym, Malakula and Santo, parents were pressured to send their children to a secondary school at Fanafo in 1971 (British Newsletter, 28 December 1971, p 6). A Noumea company, probably that of Leconte, was to get a large tract of land in exchange for heavy earth-moving equipment. At the same time, Stevens was working to arrange US markets for Santo bananas (British Newsletter, 23 December 1969, pp 9-10). The RCs stated that some Nagriamel members were

harming the proper <sup>work</sup>working of government and warned them against "intimidation and systematic obstruction". Legal action was threatened if this kept up (British Newsletter, 23 December 1969, Supplement, pp 2-3).

At the 19th session of the Advisory Council, someone told of the man who had not paid his local council taxes <sup>and had</sup> who justified his actions by saying, "A man cannot serve two masters, and Na-Griamel is for me." At the same time, people from Ambrym and Paama Islands were being told the secondary school at Santo was better than theirs (British Newsletter, 11 March 1970, pp 10-11). Later in the year, a motion was made, but not passed, to examine the movement and to correct its <sup>or</sup> false claims. The motion was defeated because Nagriamel was said to suffer from diminishing influence, and ~~that~~ an examination of it would only give it added importance. An Advisory Council member <sup>from</sup> Tanna even had to <sup>ask</sup> ask what the movement stood for (British Newsletter, <sup>24 Dec 70</sup> ~~3 July 1970~~, p 19)

In the religious sphere, Nagriamel obtained the services of two Church of Christ pastors, James Karai and Abel Bani. A new church was opened at Fanafo on 29 June 1967 by Pastor Bani. Pastor Willie of Aoba conducted the first service. The church had been built by Aobans from Nduindui (British Newsletter, 3 July 1967, p 3). When the Church of Christ withdrew its support in 1975 because of Stevens's polygamy and syncretism, the two pastors resigned from the Church of Christ and stayed with the movement (PIM, Nov<sup>e</sup>mber 1980, p 29).

In the late 1960s, American businessmen took an interest in developing Santo into a prime resort area. Eugene Peacock, a Hawaii businessman, bought land at Hog Harbor with money put up by eighty-three investors, subdivided

the land into 1450 lots and sold each lot before 1969 for \$A3000 - 4000 each. His total sales earned him between \$A 4.35 - 5.8 million. His company, Capital Guaranty Ltd, then got land at Cape Quiros <sup>in</sup> thirty kilometers north of Lokalee and subdivided it into 700 lots, all of which were sold in a year. Peacock's <sup>last</sup> third and <sup>final</sup> land purchase was at Palekula, a site nine km north of Luganville (or Santo Town), which was broken into 1200 quarter-ha plots. By this time, the authorities decided to rein in this rampant division of land -- although Peacock had obtained permanent residency through the French -- and adopted joint regulations No. 15 and No. 16 on 2 August 1971. These made subdivisions subject to the approval of the RCs and taxed any subdivisions made from 1967 at a rate of 50% of the added value (minus the value of improvements) (British Newsletter, 24 August 1971, p 13). As of August 1971, 265 plots on Santo had been registered with the authorities, mostly by American buyers. Another 3700 lots were known to be for sale with another 8500 lots possible in twenty other areas on Santo (British Newsletter, 10 August 1971, p 8). The final blow to Peacock's scheme came in March 1973, when the six major subdivisions of Capital Guaranty Ltd were rejected by the two RCs, and the investors could not recover their money. As a result of this defeat, one PIM correspondent alleges, Peacock turned to Nagriamel for help. But this effort, if ever attempted, was short-lived and led nowhere (PIM, August 1980, pp 25-26; Shears 1980: 41).

Whereas the interests of Peacock, Leconte and Ramrakha in Santo were mainly economic, those of Michael Oliver and the Phoenix Foundation were largely political. Oliver was a Lithuanian who had immigrated to the US

after World War II and eventually settled in Carson City, Nevada. Stevens had met Oliver in Fiji in the early 1970s. Together with Professor John Hospers and Robert J. Doorn, among others, Oliver was looking for a site to set up a free-trade society run on libertarian lines. Their first attempt to do this failed. In June 1972, the King of Tonga tore down the flag they had planted on Minerva Reef earlier. According to someone who took part in the Phoenix Foundation attempted colonization, they intended to anchor a ship there, the Queen Elizabeth II, and live aboard ship rather than on the reef itself. The people were also going to defend themselves with automatic weapons against the Tongans until King Tupou IV threatened to call in foreign troops (Anonymous 1983). The second attempt to set up a free-trade society occurred in 1974 in the Bahamas. The island of Abaco was to become independent of the Nassau central government, which had initially accepted an arrangement to leave the new settlers alone in exchange for the benefits of Phoenix Foundation economic development there. The Nassau government reversed itself later, banned the movement and prohibited immigration to Abaco (Anonymous 1983; PIM, August 1980, p 27).

The Foundation's third location was Santo. The personal relationship between Stevens and Oliver formed the basis for this, but Oliver did not take charge of their relationship for his own purposes. He did, however, help Nagrimel advocate its cause more boldly inside and outside the New Hebrides. He helped arrange Stevens's appearance at the UN in 1971 followed by a side trip to the US State Department (Voice of the New Hebrides, <sup>22</sup> March 1980, p 4). At the UN, Stevens delivered a paper prepared by Messrs Ramrakha that claimed the Santo people were being abused by the

British and given no education, charges which were patently false (British Newsletter, 19 October 1971, p 7). In the same year, Cliver invested in some land on Santo, perhaps with the intention of setting up the sugar refinery and fuel plant that would be built once Stevens's control over Santo was secure (Voice of the New Hebrides, 23 February 1980, pp 1,7 and 23 <sup>u</sup>August 1980, p 4). Until that happened, the Phoenix Foundation was content to provide medical supplies, advisers and money for overseas travel <sup>for</sup> the Nagriamel leaders.

It was not increasing involvement by the Phoenix Foundation that caused trouble on Santo in 1975 but the results of the first-ever general elections held there in ~~August~~ <sup>November</sup> of that year. Regulations for these elections had been agreed to at a London <sup>e</sup>Conference (November 1974) by all New Hebridean political parties. But once the results were in, it was clear to Nagriamel leaders that the candidates of the New Hebrides National Party (NHNP), which had only been formed in August 1971, had been elected because of electoral fraud. Nagriamel people, who felt they had a popular majority on Santo and resented the sudden NHNP victories, drove out those from other islands residing on Santo and appealed the election results. On 27 December 1975, Stevens declared independence for Santo under the rule of a "Nagriamel Federation" (Plant 1977: 38).

In 1976, the Phoenix Foundation increased its support of Nagriamel because of the rise in its political fortunes. On 10 May 1976, the Electoral Disputes Commission (EDC) invalidated <sup>e</sup>four seats that had been won by three NHNP candidates and one MANH (Mouvement Autonomiste des Nouvelles-Hébrides) candidate. MANH had been formed on Santo, largely by French

residents of Santo, in late 1973 (Plant 1977: 92). On 10 August, Stevens restated the independence of the "Nagriamel Federation". This time, he even had silver Nagriamel currency to use in place of the current legal tender. The Nagriamel currency was one ounce of silver minted in Massachusetts that displayed a bust of "President Moly" (Stevens adopted Moli, or Moses, as his surname to add to two middle names; his complete name from this time on was Jimmy <sup>u</sup> T<sub>A</sub>pou Patuntun Stevens Moli.) on the head's side below the motto "Individual rights for all" and, on the tail's side, a four-leaved flower in the middle with the inscriptions "Na-Griamel Federation Bank" and "One Na-Griamel" above and below the flower (Voice of the New Hebrides, 1 March 1980, p 10). By this time, work had already begun on a constitution for the "Nagriamel Federation", later called the "Vemarana Federation". The first person to work on <sup>it</sup> for Nagriamel was one Bud Jackson. His work was continued by an anonymous French-Canadian and, finally, completed by Thomas Eck, a Phoenix Foundation lawyer, several years later (Plant 1977: 38 and Voice of the New Hebrides, 22 March 1980, p 4).

The 25 October 1976 reelections for the four voided seats in the national Representative Assembly (RA) seemed to thwart a serious attempt to assert independence on Santo. Two of the seats went to Nagriamel members, Stevens being one of them (Plant 1977: 93, 95). This gave the party leaders an important voice in national affairs and <sup>kept</sup> ~~put~~ the political balance in Nagriamel's favor on Santo.

From 1960 to 1976 then, the Nagriamel movement grew from a spontaneous attempt to reclaim unused land from foreign owners, to an organized social

and religious movement with its own church, internal structure, <sup>and</sup> secondary school, and, finally, to the most dominant party on Santo anxious to maintain control of local affairs in the face of increasing NHNP influence.

Local control runs through this sixteen-year period beginning with the issue of land, then spreading to village and church matters, and issuing into a Santo-wide stand on local councils, education and medical services. The turn to island-wide matters was the result of the imprisonment of Stevens and Buluk in 1968, so a certain amount of revenge guided the actions of the movement. Stevens was a charismatic figure (Fisher 1983) but, in the long run, was <sup>only</sup> to prove able to lead by telling the membership what they should not do rather than what they should do (Hours 1976: 231). As one of Stevens's correspondents, who was also a member of the Advisory Council, remarked in 1971, "Mr Stevens had lost control of the movement and was being driven from behind" (British Newsletter, 19 October 1971, p 8).

Tanna: The Presbyterian Mission, 1839-1940.

A movement similar to the Nagriamel movement had already grown up on Tanna several decades earlier. In the 1940s, the John Frum movement had suddenly appeared to the chagrin of condominium authorities. For a century before this happened, missionaries had been working and ruling on Tanna. The first long-term foreign presence there was that of Presbyterians. Three Samoans were left by John Williams of the London Missionary Society on 30 November 1839, and two more Samoans followed the next year. The first European missionaries were Turner and Nisbet, who arrived in June 1842 on the Camden. They remained only a few months (Annual Report 1933: 20), but Turner returned in January <sup>h</sup> 1843 aboard the John Williams with another missionary, Murray. They remained for several years (and prepared the first book in a New Hebridean language, a catechism ten pages long by Turner (O'Reilly 1956: 11)) but left for Aneityum in September 1846 after the

discontent and harm wrought by three successive epidemics. But they were asked to return to Port Resolution in March 1847. Several years later, the Edward, Capt. Thomas, introduced smallpox, which wiped out a gre<sup>a</sup> number of Tannese. As a result, one of the two Presbyterian mission stations was abandoned in October 1853.

In the meantime, the Presbyterians were having marked success at converting those on nearby Aneityum. Their success sparked revival of interest in the mission on Tanna and, in the following year (1854), a station was erected at Yakwaraka on the east coast just below Port Resolution. Four years later, at the end of 1858, Reverends J.G. Paton, who became the best known missionary on Tanna and whose son, Frank, would succeed him in the 1890s, and Cop<sup>l</sup>land occupied Port Resolution, and Mathieson went to Yimwarekak near the southeastern coast of Tanna. After a foiled attempt on Paton's life involving a pact between two pagan groups who worshipped the ancient deity Karapenmun, eleven lay<sup>m</sup>issionaries from Aneityum were assigned the south coast of Tanna from Yakwaraka to Port Resolution. Within several years, there was strong church influence, and one teacher was placed at Yanekahi, a region west of Port Resolution, and another at Black Beach. Thomas Neilson was placed at Port Resolution in 1868 and ~~succeeded~~ <sup>was followed</sup> by William Watt at Kwamera the next year.

In the 1870s labor recruiting for Queensland and Samoan plantations began in earnest. Coconut plantations were also established by traders and missionaries to supplement their stipends (Scarr 1967: 181). By establishing plantations, the missionaries also hoped to furnish the Tannese with enough material goods and money to offset any temptations offered by labor recruiters

(Guiart 1958: 129).

By the late 1890s, the Presbyterians had acquired land at Lenakel on the southwest coast bequeathed to them by Worthington, a trader. They were campaigning against kava drinking and prostitution. Sorcerers who practiced a species of magic known as netik were most troublesome to the Presbyterians, but the deity Karapenmun did not figure as noticeably as he had once done. Wearing clothes became the symbol of being a Christian (Guiart 1958: 125). This was yet another split among the Tannese added to the traditional opposition of two tribal phratries, the Koyometa (or Kauyamera) dominant in the southwest and north-central parts versus the Numrukwen (or Numrikwen) dominant elsewhere, and of coastal dwellers (kwatahren) versus bush people (nieli asolimin or numata keijiv) (Humphreys 1926: 13-14; Guiart 1958: 90 and mapping).

During the heyday of its authority, the missionaries set up new villages, usually named with Biblical names such as Jericho, Antioch and Nazareth, and they installed village leaders (Guiart 1952). They held much land in trust for the Tannese so as to prevent its later alienation by plantation owners. From 1906 to 1912, they proscribed virtually everything pertaining to custom and ran courts to impose and execute punishments handed down to violators (Jupp and Sawyer 1979: 219 n. 39). Some were made to do road work for collecting wild honey on Sundays (Scarr 1967: 245). By 1912, virtually all the copra business was in their hands, their converts providing them with copra which they, in turn, sold to copra traders (Guiart 1956: 223).

The first break in the Presbyterian hold on the converted Tannese -- the pagans had always remained outside their grasp -- came in 1909 when a non-mission court system was approved for Tanna by the French Resident Commissioner. In 1912, all courts not run by the condominium authorities<sup>o</sup> were ordered closed, which met with a vehement Presbyterian counterattack (Scarr 1967: 243, 246). The mission continued on as before despite these official impositions on its domain, until events came to a head in 1940.

The preceding overview of Presbyterian mission work on Tanna until 1940, drawn largely from Guiart (1956: 117-129), reveals the hostility they received at the hands of the Tannese, some of which is attributable to epidemics. After 1895, their power among the converted increased until 1909 without any effective foreign interference (Labor recruiters continued to call at Tanna until 1910, but their running battle with the missionaries does not seem to have altered the mission's authority.). But the changes in the local court system of 1909 and 1912 and the official approval given to traditional practices that had hitherto been banned were serious setbacks, as seen in the mission response to them. Just how serious was revealed a generation later.

Tanna: The John Frum Movement, 1940-1975.

Two motives for the events of April 1940 are given by Jean Guiart, the authority on Tanna (Guiart 1952: 172 and 1956: 224, 226-227). The first is that the missionaries failed to provide sufficient education to allow the Tannese to progress in their efforts to assure themselves of material progress. The church had, therefore, reached a dead end and was no longer

useful to the converts. The second is that Presbyterian conversion was a cover for the establishment of local control and, at the same time, a cover for "a variant of the anti-European current" that had been shown to all classes of foreigners previously. (It might be worthwhile to remark that, even in 1948, the Tannese were regarded by other New Hebrideans as s<sup>c</sup>orderers and poisoners (O'Reilly 1948: 192).) What emerged in the first decade of the movement was an ostentatious reassertion of traditional practices intended to exclude non-Tannese of all kinds, although adventitiously chosen non-traditional elements were involved in the expression of this, while previously introduced elements were abandoned. This shows the desire for education to have been, at best, a quite minor consideration. No new schools were built on a large s<sup>c</sup>ale soon afterwards. The economic aspect of the movement was more noticeable in the "cargo" orientation but this was not especially prominent in the beginning and before the arrival of US troops in 1942. The dominant motives seem to be religious and political at once: the ousting of Presbyterian theocracy for indigenous theocracy.

The originator of the John Frum movement was Manehevi. He appeared in early 1940 claiming to be John Frum, who was a representative of the ancient deity Karapenmun; Manehevi dressed in flashly clothe<sup>s</sup> <sup>and</sup> painted his body in assorted c<sup>l</sup>ors. He prophesied that Tanna would become flat; the valleys would be filled with mountains and Tanna joined to Aneityum and Erromango. Once that had happened, the world would be rejuvenated, and John Frum would provide <sup>e</sup>nough money for everything. Until then, the whites and non-Tannese must be expelled, European money abolished and the old ways

resumed (O'Reilly 1948: 194-195).

On 11 April 1940, Lenakel shops were invaded. Manehevi advocated Friday as a day of rest, collective work and gardening. European money was discarded or spend<sup>t</sup> lavishly (Guiart 1952: 166). One month later, on 11 May, Nako, hitherto a Presbyterian church leader, ordered people to abandon churches; Presbyterian and Dominican services were aban<sup>o</sup>ndoned, and children stopped going to school. Saturdays were used for dancing and kava drinking (Guiart 1952: 165).

On 30 May, the Germaine, Capt. Marinacce, brought troops to Tanna, arrested and handcuff<sup>ed</sup>ed the principals and took them to Lenakel. After an interrogation, Manehevi was tied to a tree to expose him as a fraudulent John Frum. Various chiefs were required to pay<sup>e</sup> one hundred pounds as compensation for the dam<sup>a</sup>ges caused. Manehevi was convicted when tried and sentence<sup>d</sup>s to three years in prison and banished from Tanna for five year<sup>s</sup>. Nine others were jailed for a year. In July and November 1940, twenty others were ~~jailed for a year in~~ <sup>arrested and sent to</sup> Port Vila (O'Reilly 1948: 195-199).

Despite the unmasking of John Frum, the movement began to take on a life of its own. A new ~~movement~~ <sup>branch</sup> arose at Sulphur Bay and Port Resolution. John Frum's three sons -- Isaac, the spokesman for them, Jacob and Lastuan -- were said to have landed at Ipek<sup>e</sup>l on the east coast. Three young teenaged girls -- Gladys, Mersi and Doroti -- interpreted for Isaac, who wa<sup>s</sup> to become king of southeast Tanna. Monday was to be a day of rest. More were arrested in this episode, and seven convicted of sex crimes. Isaac turned out to be a boy named Siaka from Sulphur Bay (O'Reilly 1948: 199; Guiart 1952: 168).

The next stage in the movement's history came in October 1943. The British District Agent (DA) Nicol<sup>o</sup> returned from a vacation on 11 October. Three days later, he cabled for police to be sent to control some John Frum troubles. About 250 people were involved; their leader was one Neloai<sup>ag</sup> (or Loai<sup>ag</sup>) from Lomaper, who proclaimed himself John Frum, as well as king of Tanna and king of the USA. By 18 October, Neloai<sup>ag</sup> had been captured, but the Tannese continued building an airstrip in the Greenhill area. This was in preparation for the expected cargo. The next day, Nicol cabled for one hundred police. The police arrived aboard the Echo accompanied by two American naval officers to tell the people not to expect any goods from America. The force surrounded the airstrip under construction on 22 October and captured two hundred men and weapons. The Echo took forty-six prisoners to Port Vila. Neloai<sup>ag</sup> was sentenced to two years in prison, ten others to one year, and the rest to three months. (After completing<sup>y</sup> his sentence, Neloai<sup>ag</sup> lived in the Efate bush for three years on taro and wild pigs until he was captured on 29 April 1948, certified insane and shipped off to Boumea.) At the conclusion of this episode, Nicol claimed John Frum was "supported and inspired by a general credulity over the whole island" (O'Reilly 1948: 203).

Several <sup>minor</sup> ~~aner~~ incidents occurred in the next few years. Jocteur, the first French District Agent installed on Tanna, imprisoned two men in February <sup>1945</sup> ~~1945~~ for John Frum activities. Johnson, a British official sent to re<sup>place</sup> Nicol, <sup>who</sup> ~~he~~ had died in 1944, noticed a resurgence of medicine men in September 1946. A sensational event occurred less than

a year later. On 11 April 1947, exactly seven years after the original John Frum disturbance, residents of Locafi and Latabu villages <sup>at</sup> resided Bannister's store in White Sands in eastern Tanna and tore price tags off his goods. Loyakee, the group's leader, claimed he was trying to carry out the orders of one of John Frum's sons, Isaac, and that Isaac had banned certain colors: red because it was the symbol for blood, blue for sickness and yellow for death. Only black and white were to be worn from then on. Loyakee and two others were sentenced to five years in jail, eleven others to two <sup>or</sup> years and five years exile (Guiart 1952: 169 and O'Reilly 1948: 204). In September 1947, nine coconuts were sent from Lamap on Malakula Island, where some of the arrested John Frum Tannese had been deported, to Tanna. They were buried near the shore. When the authorities investigated, they decided to take no chances and dug them up. Some of those questioned said the coconuts belonged to a new species that would improve the yield. But others spoke of it in paradoxical, possibly sinister, words, "If the bodies are Malakula, the spirits are Tanna" (O'Reilly 1948: 205).

By this time, ten John Frum exiles on Malakula had spread <sup>their</sup> ~~their~~ influence among others from Malakula and Ambrym. From their internment camp at Port Sandwich, John Frum ideology spread to the nearby villages of Deven and Burbar, where Ambrym people had been settled after a 1913 earthquake had badly damaged their home island. The people from Ambrym were Presbyterians. Finally, Uro village on Ambrym was reached. The people there put up barricades at the start of 1947 to keep out unwanted visitors. Each visitor had to register at one of three checkpoints along the three paths into the village. Militias were organized, and new money was expected to replace

the current legal tender. Tin can telephones were used to call Tamar, the ancestral deity of the nearby volcano. Villagers of Wakou, Sulol and Malver at Craig Cove, and of Raumulu and Fanu were also affected by the John Frum "sweet potatoes", as <sup>h</sup>ey called themselves (Guiart 1952: 171). From Ambrym, the movement followed traditional lines to Paama, where people divested themselves of money and killed pigs, as ~~as~~ well as to the islands of Epi and Pentecost.

By 1950, then, the John Frum movement turned from one man's grandiose attempt at theocracy to a sort of widespread resistance to the missionaries on the one hand <sup>and</sup> to foreign standards of wealth on the other. Most members had once been in the Presbyterian church, but they were subsequently joined by large numbers of pagans and half-halves, or "those who had been in touch with the Mission without completely giving up their pagan behavior" (Guiart 1952: 171). The movement began in the Green Point district, where Tukosmere, the mountain of Karapenmun, is located and where the Koyometa group is dominant. From there, the activity spread to the east coast and northern part of the island, where the Mumrukwen are dominant. Thus, the movement <sup>pe</sup>aled to a wide section of the population and was adopted by <sup>partisan</sup>s of competing groups (Guiart 1956: map facing 90). The common elements are opposition to foreign-introduced institutions and the elaboration of local control (for example, John Frum among the Koyometa versus the sons of John Frum among the Mumrukwen).

National Politics in the New Hebrides, 1975-1979.

By 1975, a variety of political parties, or perhaps more accurately influential social movements, had arisen on both Santo and Tanna. On Santo, there were Nagriamel, Mouvement Autonomiste des Nouvelles-Hébrides (MANH), Tabwemasana, and Friend Melanesia Party (FMP). Tanna had John Frum and Kapiel, which was restricted to the Middle Bush area in northeastern Tanna (Plant 1977: 10-11). Subsequently, MANH, Nagriamel and some others formed the Federation of Independents (FEDIP or FOI), while John Frum, Kapiel, FMP, Tabwemasana and the Union des Communautés des Nouvelles-Hébrides (U~~N~~<sup>H</sup>) joined into Tanunion (Plant 1977: 195).

While these ~~local parties were forming~~ <sup>larger groups were being formed,</sup> but not coalescing to ~~achieve~~ <sup>achieve</sup> a stronger voice in the entire archipelago, another party was being formed and gaining adherents all over the New Hebrides. This was the New Hebrides National Party (NHNP), which originated in 1971 partly "to counter the Nagriamel movement", which Aiden Garae, the first NHNP president, characterized as "anti-government and unproductive" (British Newsletter, 16 November 1971, p 4). At the fifth NHNP congress on Malakula in 1977, the NHNP became the Vanuaaku Party (VP) and decided on 'Vanuatu' as the new name for the New Hebrides after independence (Plant 1978: 194-195). The initial opposition between the VP and Nagriamel soon spread to the other social movements. When, later in 1977, the VP proposed restricting public instruction to English (and dropping French), there were passionate demonstrations on Santo, Tanna, Malakula and Efate for retaining French (Plant 1978: 197). The VP also boycotted the 19-21 July constitutional conference attended by other leaders in Paris, then boycotted the 29 November general elections for the RA (Plant 1978: 198, 201). As a result, thirty-eight members from the opposition parties were declared elected unopposed;

of these, twenty-six had no previous political experience. George Kalsakau was elected chief minister. In response to this, the VP set up its own People's Provisional Government (PPG) from 29 November 1977 until 11 May 1978 (Jupp and Sawyer 1979: 210). The PPG was suspended to form a committee on electoral reform to arrange as much national stability as possible before the approaching date of independence. On 27 December 1978, a coalition Government of National Unity (GNU) was formed after a previous no-confidence vote had brought down the Kalsakau government. The GNU was composed of five members from the RA and five from the VP. It also had the blessing of the condominium authorities.

Despite some local troubles in 1979 -- there was violence<sup>e</sup> on Tanna between the John Frum and Kapiel groups on one side and VP on the other in February -- the leaders of the various parties continued to work on their common problems. A constitutional planning committee was established in April with members drawn from the GNU, RA, VP and 'custom' parties (Jupp and Sawyer 1979: 219). In the meantime, Nagriamel, John Frum and eight other groups (UCNH, MANH, FEDIP, FMP, Kapiel, Natatok Efate, Kastom Tanna and NUCP) formed the Federal Party on 9-10 February. The constitutional committee finished its work on 19 September. Its two most important measures were the creation of a President who was independent of parliament and of Regional Councils (RC) for both Santo and Tanna to allow for some measure of local government (MacClancy 1981: 93).

The elections for the RA and the two RCs marked a turning point in the relationships between the VP and the other parties, often lumped together under the label 'Moderates' (although there was a small party that bore that name, as well). After the results of the 14 November voting

were in, it was found that the VP had won majorities in all three bodies. In the RA, they had won twenty-five seats of thirty-six outright; in the Santo RC, they gained eight of fifteen seats with a popular vote victory of 4212 to the opposition's 4027. In the Tanna RC, they had also won eight of fifteen seats but with a narrower <sup>popular vote</sup> margin of 2788 to 2712 (Voice of the New Hebrides, 1 December 1979, p 6).

### The Santo and Tanna 'Rebellions', 1979-1980.

The VP victories in the two RCs had caught the local parties there off guard, but they were quick to react in a rowdy, occasionally violent, manner in the ensuing months. This shows the deep feeling they had of the injustice of outsiders, even New Hebridean outsiders, gaining a measure of control over the affairs of their <sup>islands</sup> at a local level. Shortly after the success of the VP in gaining control of the Santo RC, the Nagriamel party and Tabwemasana groups threatened those Luganville residents from the Banks and Pentecost Islands who had voted for the VP and scared off over four hundred, mostly women and children, in the first few weeks after the election. Stevens blamed them for costing him <sup>victory</sup> ~~to lose~~ in the RC. To restore <sup>a</sup> calm, condominium officials, as well as Chief Minister Walter Lini, Gerard Leymang and others, went to Fanafo to talk with the malcontents (Voice of the New Hebrides, 1 December 1979, p 7 and PIM, January 1980, p 14). Later in the month, a visit by the People's Republic of China's Martial Arts Team to Santo was cancelled, probably due to this unrest (Voice of the New Hebrides, 29 December 1979, p 3).

The Santo parties <sup>led</sup> filed a claim with the Electoral Disputes Commission (EDC), which was composed of John Judge, as British co-chairman, Jean-François Aubry, as French co-chairman, Timothy Bila and Joseph Kalo. They went to

Santo to hear cases and convened there from 29 January to 1 February 1980. Verdicts<sup>t</sup> were expected before the end of February, but Judge resigned before then citing interference of the executive in judicial affairs; two months later, Aubry resigned because the French government asked him to do so (Voice of the New Hebrides, 20 April 1980, p 3 and Fisher 1983). A new EDC was appointed in May but had not reached any decisions concerning the Santo cases before the troubles began there later in the month (Voice of the New Hebrides, 24 May 1980, p 1). These claims were never investigated further or ruled upon.

Nagriamel had not won a single seat in the RA. But the other parties who had <sup>seats</sup> agreed to boycott the legislative sessions to protest <sup>Nagriamel's</sup> ~~their~~ claims of VP election<sup>t</sup> fraud. Only two independents (Vincent Boulekone and Maxime Carlot) and one previous government minister (Gerard Leymang) attended these sessions despite the boycott (Plant 1981: 94). Carlot said this split among the opposition was the result of a dispute over who was to lead <sup>h</sup> ~~the~~ opposition, of the absence of a means of uniting the independents and the other parties, and of a lack of experience in electioneering (Voice of the New Hebrides, 22 December 1979).

During the boycott of the RA, Alexis Yolou, <sup>t</sup> the only John Frum member of the RA, along with Charley Nako, who was a Kapiel MRA, and Jean-Marie Leye traveled to Paris late in February with a memorandum addressed to Queen Elizabeth II and the French government alleging rigged elections, citing abuses of the British going back to mission times and asking for "justice, economic independence, and self-determination" (Voice of the New Hebrides, 1 March 1980, p 6).

Their <sup>unsuccessful</sup> diplomatic mission was only one facet of the outpouring of sentiment favoring expulsion of the VP from Tanna and the establishment of

a secessionist state. The airport at Is<sup>a</sup>ngel was dug up and the terminal building smashed. John Frum and Kapiel members threatened Futunese who were preparing to attend the New Hebridean arts festival in Port Vila, as well as residents of villages from Lowney (Loanei) to Bethel<sup>located</sup> in the northwest, Is<sup>a</sup>ngel and southwest districts of Tanna. Villagers from Loanatum (Loawanatom), Yolou's village, massed and marched on the British and French district agencies at Lenakel and Isangel. Kapile<sup>el</sup> from the Midde<sup>el</sup> Bush district destroyed bush markets and gardens. At the annual John Frum celebrations (15 February each year), Aissea, a chief from Sulphur Bay, flew the independence flag for an hour then lowered it. Although the flag of Vemarana had been flown at Big Bay, Santo, in the second week of January 1980, at a time when Lini was out of the country, Tanna chiefs did not want to have Stevens declare independence on behalf of Tanna. The John Frums wanted a return to custom and support from those who respected custom, that is, the French (Voice of the New Hebrides, 23 February 1980, pp 3-5).

Once Stevens raised the flag on Santo, he and his followers behaved as if they had control of the island in defiance of the central government. The Lini government responded to this with the creation of a special security committee consisting of the Chief Minister and both Resident Commissioners (at that time, Andrew Stuart and Jean-Jacques Robert). This committee was placed in control of the Police Mobile Units (PMU), each unit being composed of equal numbers of British and French policemen, but there had to be unanimity before the PMUs could be deployed. Upset by this arrangement, which stifled deployment of the PMUs once the real troubles began in May,

Lini toyed with the idea of declaring <sup>+</sup>mar~~sh~~ial law but was rebuffed by the two commissioners (Voice of the New Hebrides, 19 January 1980, p 1, and 8 March 1980, p 6, and 14 June 1980, p 8).

In the first week of January, a Vemarana headquarters was set up at Luganville. Later, the Nagriamel stronghold at Fanafo was closed to outsiders, and the government District Agent (DA) on Santo, Redy Henry, was more or less forced to leave the island (Voice of the New Hebrides, 26 January 1980, p 3 and 19 January 1980, pp 4-5). An airstrip was <sup>u</sup>built at Fanafo with a bulldozer and grader; Nagriamel members demanded money for renewal of <sup>si</sup>business licenses on the island. Namele leaves were placed on the doors of the former agencies to taboo them and keep officials away.

Two platoons of PMUs were finally sent to Santo and Tanna in the first week of March "to reduce tensions and provide training", according to Commissioner Stuart (Voice of the New Hebrides, 8 March 1980, p 6). At the same time, a new DA, Job Dalesa, was installed. During this month, Stevens was absent from Santo for <sup>c</sup>much of the time. He flew to Noumea in the private plane of the French High Commissioner, then on to Paris with other opposition members for peace talks, and <sup>a</sup>finally to Washington, D.C. for undisclosed reasons (Voice of the New Hebrides, 1 March 1980, p 6 and 29 March 1980, p 1). On Easter Sunday, Stevens returned to the New Hebrides with Thomas Eck, who was carrying one thousand copies of the Vemarana constitution. Eck had obtained a visa through French channels and was not a prohibited immigrant when he arrived. All copies of the constitution were confiscated <sup>at</sup> ~~it~~ the airport (Voice of the New Hebrides, 19 April 1980, p 3). The other important Phoenix Foundation contribution

made around this time was a set of radio transmitters, which were used for 'Vemarana' pirate radio broadcasts for the duration of the troubles. (A paper entitled 'An <sup>Investment</sup> Investment in the Vemarana Federation' was presented at a conference in Freeport, Bahamas, during 15-18 May 1980. It set out investment policies of a corporation with directors Eck, Hospers, and Oliver. The Freeport conference was attended by several New Hebrideans, among them Jean-Marie Leye, James Garae and Jimmy Giovanni (Voice of the New Hebrides, 7 June 1980, p 3).) The total value of Phoenix Foundation aid to Nagriamel amounted to \$130,000 in goods and services and some off-beat political advice but no weapons or military training (Voice of Vanuatu, 23 August 1980, p 4).

During February 1980, John Frum and Nagriamel had obtained dynamite. The former French DA on Tanna, M Payen, had given some to Alexis Yolou for "blasting reefs" (Voice of the New Hebrides, 1 March 1980, p 1). Twenty cases of dynamite had disappeared from the Santo public works grounds after the DA was driven out in January (Voice of the New Hebrides, 26 January 1980, p 3).

The John Frums and Kapiel members acted first. Late in May, on 26 May, District Commissioner Ruben Tamata and his assistant Joe Joseph were kidnapped and taken to Middle Bush headquarters. The Tannese involved came from Middle Bush, White Sands and White Grass. During the PMU raid on the Middle Bush headquarters two days later (28 May), the two officials made their way to safety. Twenty-six people were arrested and taken into custody (Voice of the New Hebrides, 31 May 1980, p 3 and 7 June 1980, p 3 and 14 June 1980, p 5).

Before the arrested opposition <sup>Tannese</sup> leaders were interrogated by the Crown Prosecutor on 10 June 1980, the EDC began hearings on irregularities in

the voting at Isaka, White Sands, where there had been no envelopes on voting day, so voters were told to return the next day. But most did not. The first EDC session on the Tanna case was held at Port Vila on 7 June and the second at Isaka on 10-11 June. The EDC later declared the Isaka election void and the Tanna results held in abeyance pending the new results of a second election at Isaka for the RA seats. Appeals from any interested parties were also solicited. But, like the Santo case, no decision was ever reached to carry out a second ballot (Voice of the New Hebrides, 14 June 1980, p 3 and 28 June 1980, p 4).

The invalidation of the Isaka vote was overshadowed by the raid on the Isangel jail by John Frums and Kapiels to free their twenty-six friends. The captives were guarded by a dozen police and sixty to one hundred VP members with .303 rifles. During the raid, six people were hit by .22 bullets, six with shotguns pellets, three grazed by bullets, three cut by tear gas canisters, and seventeen received various injuries (Voice of the New Hebrides, 21 June 1980, p 4). In the course of the shooting, Yolou was in the forefront and, whether by accident or not (See the testimony of Dominique Fraoe of White Sands in Shears (1980: 120).), he sustained shotgun wounds in the <sup>side</sup> ~~back~~, .22 bullet wounds in the back and neck and a smashed skull. He died from the bleeding caused by the first two wounds (Voice of the New Hebrides, 14 June 1980, pp 1, 3 and 5 July 1980, pp 4-5). After his death on 11 June, the VP called for a minute of silence for him at noon that day. Meanwhile, villages surrounding Yolou's home village were being deserted as people fled to escape the retribution of his relatives. They stayed away for a week and started to return around 18 June (Voice of the New Hebrides, 21 June 1980, p 4).

At the time of his death, Yolou was carrying dynamite, detonators, tear gas canisters, ammunition, home-made bombs (in Fanta orange <sup>d</sup>so~~da~~ cans) and knives (Voice of the New Hebrides, 28 June 1980, p 3). Later in the month, Commissioner Robert visited Tanna and presented 100,000 FNH to Yolou's widow as a <sup>personal</sup> present from <sup>French High Commissioners</sup> Dijoud. Yolou's death marked the end of anti-government disturbances on Tanna although the PMU were flown in again on 4 July after rumors of trouble started anew (Voice of the New Hebrides, 12 July 1980, p 3).

Trouble on Santo began a day after the Tanna troubles. Stevens and "his band of childish and untrained half-castes, Frenchmen and ignorant natives on Santo", among whom the Frenchmen were the dominant ones, moved into Luganville on the night of 27 May and captured the DC and the chief of police (letter of B. Mastanik, Voice of the New Hebrides, 17 July 1980, p 7). As early as February 1979, a French professor had warned that "If the VP succeeds in establishing its political supremacy, there is a move on for a general opposition exodus to the island of Santo. From there, Freedom Fighters, mostly speaking the language of Moliere, will carry on the ... struggle" (Jupp and Sawyer 1979: 218 n. 32). Others who allied themselves with the Nagriamel were businessmen, settlers and French metis. Robert had also assured Stevens of military and government support from the beginning but was unable to come through with it (MacClancy 1981: 94-95).

Twelve police officers were locked up, and the Pekoa airport was closed. Some shops were closed, but life was near normal before long (Voice of the New Hebrides, 31 May 1980, p 3). The Nagriamel began their own police force, mainly with young men armed with clubs and bows and arrows. Government vehicles were requisitioned for Nagriamel use.

Two thousand people were evacuated from the island aboard the vessels Euphrosyne, Kismet, Alize II, Pacific, Assembly Federesen, and Armagnac. Many of those who left were told never to come back. The DC and other hostages had been well <sup>e</sup> treated and reached Port Vila unharmed but tired (Voice of the New Hebrides, 14 June 1980, p 3).

In Port Vila, VP supporters threatened to send a "Peace Force" to Santo unless action was taken by condominium authorities <sup>soon</sup> ~~by then~~. Lini ordered a naval blockade of Santo that lasted until the middle of August. Peace negotiations involving government and condominium officials failed to make any progress in June and early July. But at the Tuvalu<sup>u</sup> South Pacific Forum meeting in July, PNG Prime Minister Chan signed an agreement to send in the PNG Defence Force after independence to end the troubles (Voice of Vanuatu, 16 August 1980, p 3).

After the Tuvalu meeting, Chan stopped in the New Hebrides with <sup>Brig-</sup> ~~Brig-~~ General Ted Diro to discuss the role of the Defence Force, which was to include Australian advisers, two patrol boats and three aircraft with soldiers. The new Vanuatu parliament approved the use of PNG forces the week after Chan left. The first forty-seven PNG troops arrived 22 July to perform pipe and drum retreats at independence celebrations (Voice of the New Hebrides, 26 July 1980, p 3).

One week before independence day, two hundred British commandos of the 42nd Royal Marine and French paratroopers were sent to Luganville to reestablish government authority. The troops raised the flag of Vanuatu on independence day <sup>but</sup> ~~but~~ could do little else than protect themselves from then on (MacClancy 1981: 100-101).

The change-over from British and French forces to PNG forces on Santo had been agreed upon for 20 August. The first Kumul Forces arrived there the morning of 18 August and began rounding up stolen vehicles the next day, as well as seizing five blockage<sup>d</sup>-running ships, the Pilou Pilou, stolen from Noumea, Nagriamel Federation, Taswegian, Sola and Kompito. (Shears 1980: 190-191; Voice of Vanuatu, 23 August 1980, p 3 and 30 August 1980, p 2). Job Dalesa, the expelled DC, was brought back and took over his post under PNG protection. At this time, Luganville was "a dump. Vandalism and the effects of looting can be clearly seen along the main street. Buildings are wrecked and tumbling down; shops are boarded up. ... The only service is refuse collection" (Voice of Vanuatu, 23 <sup>August</sup> ~~August~~ 1980, p <sup>3</sup> ~~2~~).

It was not long before the Fanafo headquarters were <sup>taken.</sup> ~~assaulted~~. The Luganville Vemarana office had been closed on 19<sup>a</sup> August and the Vemarana flag lowered. The Santo copra mill was burned down on 26 August. As on Tanna, the trouble ended because of a death. Eddie Stevens, Jimmy's son, was killed when the jeep he was riding in got into a gun battle with a PNG roadblock eight km south of Fanafo and a grenade exploded inside the jeep near him. According to Shears (1980: 207), the death of Eddie made Jimmy remorseful, and he decided to <sup>u</sup>surrender shortly afterwards. When PNG troops reached Fanafo the morning of 31 August, two thousand elders, women and children were seated around the Vemarana flagpole. Jimmy Stevens quietly walked out of the main building and surrendered. He and 71 others -- 30 ni-Vanuatu, 37 metis, 4 Frenchmen -- were arrested and their weapons confiscated (Shears 1980: 208).

Consequences of the Disturbances, 1980-1983.

Having failed in gaining control of affairs on their islands, the Nagriamels and John Frums and others have receded into a posture of non-cooperation with the central government.

On Tanna, 256 were tried for their part in the May and June troubles in February and March 1981. At Fanafo, over three hundred people from Paama were ordered to leave the village with <sup>its</sup> "houses...well built of local materials and corrugated iron roofing" and "straight footpaths flanked by well-tended hibiscus hedges" (Tam Tam, 20 September 1980, p 9).

But elsewhere on Santo, "Once prosperous plantations fall deeper into jungle. It's custom feuds and apathy that grow" (Voice of Vanuatu, 16 October 1981, p 2). Over seven hundred French nationals, the backbone of the Santo resistance, had fled to Noumea before the arrival of the PNG troops; 107 of them were declared prohibited immigrants later, among them two members of the RA elected in November 1979 (Guy Prevot and Georges Cronsteadt) (Voice of Vanuatu, 10 October 1980, p 5). In addition to the French, four Australians, three Tongans, seven Americans and a Dutch woman were banned from the country (Voice of Vanuatu, 17 October 1980, p 3).

Over four hundred from Santo were tried for their crimes and defended by Maitre Leder, a Noumea lawyer who put the blame squarely on Robert for what had happened on Santo. Those charged were done so under Condominium regulations No. 11 (1974) on disturbances and No. 12 (1962) on riots. Leder claimed the French had told Stevens that troops would be sent to Santo (PIM, March 1981, pp 17-18). Stevens pleaded guilty to ten charges and was tried and found guilty on an additional charge. Chief Justice Cooke sentenced him on 21 November 1980 to 14 years and six months jail and a fine of 220,000 FNH, or an additional 2 years and eight months in lieu of payment (Voice of Vanuatu, 27 November 1980, p 4). After an escape attempt in September 1982, Stevens's sentence was extended by two and a half years after he was found guilty of five counts of attempted escape (Voice of Vanuatu, 29 October 1982, p 3).

By early 1982, the government had completed its Santo claims investigation and submitted them to Britain and France for payment. The final ~~claims~~ <sup>claims</sup> amounted to \$A 4.9 million for 854 separate claims, the largest of which was \$A 2 million for the burned copra mill (PIM, April 1982, p 6).

Because of the preindependence troubles, the number of active members<sup>s</sup> of parliament fell from 39 to 35; two had been deported, one slain and one (George Kalkoa) elected President by the electoral college, consisting of all members of the RA and the president<sup>s</sup> of the two RCs (Voice of the New Hebrides, 5 July 1980, p 1). The first ordinary session of parliament was not held until February 1981 (Voice of Vanuatu, 20 March 1981, p 2) and the four vacancies<sup>s</sup> were not filled <sup>until</sup> in by-elections were held in August and September 1982 (Voice of Vanuatu, 6 August 1982, p 3).

Without Stevens, Fanafo, though still inhabited, is languishing and in the January 1983 municipal elections in Luganville there was only a token turnout of under forty percent of the vote. Although the VP gained seven of thirteen seats in four wards, five of its candidates were later declared ineligible. As a result, Prime Minister Lini fired the government minister responsible, so Lini said, for managing by-elections (PIM, <sup>March</sup> ~~January~~ 1983). Things are quiet for the moment on Santo and Tanna, but quiet because of non-cooperation and, perhaps, active underground planning for future courses of action by the Nagriamels and John Frums.

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