THE EMERGENCE OF AN ETHNIC MILLENARIAN THINKING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONALISM IN TAHITI

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This article analyzes the emergence in Tahiti of a body of theological and philosophical works written in Tahitian by Duro Raapoto, the leading intellectual of the Protestant Church and one of the best poets of French Polynesia. They constitute a new syncretic and millennialistic rewriting of Tahitian history as well as a rereading of anthropological ideas relative to pre-European society through a reinterpretation of some essential concepts of Polynesian culture. Their author's objective is to restore the golden age of innocence presented as "the authentic Tahitian religion" and to establish the Kingdom of God within the Tahitian people, "God's chosen." One of the oft-recurring themes is the need to cleanse the Māòhi land of its sins and faults. Land is considered a gift of God, and France and other nuclear powers are associated with death. These writings are the expression in the field of religious studies of a type of ethnic and millenarian thought also found in the reawakening of Māòhi culture and the quasi-religious celebration of Māòhi identity in the arts and popular songwriting. They also have a political dimension, adding force to pro-independence speeches and to the development of Tahitian nationalism.

Contemporary religious anthropology has found a prominent field of research in the assessment of the religious aspect of nonreligious phenomena among indigenous people, with an emphasis on political phenomena. It also attempts to shed light on "external" (i.e., nonreligious) determinants of phenomena that are apparently religious, mainly through the study of prophetic communities and nativist millenarian movements.

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In this regard, for those interested in Polynesian culture, a major event is currently taking place in Tahiti the importance of which is yet unnoted by foreign scholars or the local elite. It is the emergence of a body of works apparently related to the sole area of theology that is at the same time of genuine linguistic and literary interest. This article will show that it also carries political connotations, in a double sense: because it is the product of particular historical conditions (the integration of this part of Polynesia into the French system, the questioning of this colonial presence and of nuclear testing in the last thirty years, and so forth) and because it contributes to the march of history by adding to the development of Tahitian nationalistic discourse.

These writings, entirely in Tahitian *(reo māòhi)* are the work of Duro Raapoto, one of the best phraseologists, locutionists, and theoreticians of the Tahitian language. The son of Pastor Samuel Raapoto, who was the first president of the Protestant Church (Eglise Evangélique de Polynésie Française), from 1963 to 1976, Duro Raapoto was a theology student before choosing a career as a Tahitian-language professor. A writer and poet, he is the leading intellectual of this church. While within the church he is considered practically above reproach, he can be highly critical of its hierarchy, although he uses the Eglise Evangélique to publish his works and disseminate his ideas. All four of his major theology works written between 1988 and 1993 were published by the church in printings of more than ten thousand copies, something of a record in local publishing.[1]

In spite of these numbers, his writings, each around one hundred pages long, have gone more or less unnoticed in Tahiti outside the Protestant community. Written in scholarly and sometimes hermetic language, in addition to being published by an ecclesiastical institution, they escaped the attention of most of the French and local membership of the ruling elite. Nevertheless, given the historical importance of the Protestant Church in Tahiti—with its large membership, its struggle for political evolution, and its denunciation of nuclear tests, land sales, and real-estate speculation—it would be wrong to consider Raapoto's works as limited to theology. The wider consequences of the following evocative titles are self-explanatory: *Te rautiraa i te parau a te Atua e te iho tumu Māòhi* (Exaltation of God's Word and Traditional Māòhi Identity; 1988); *Poroì i te nūnaa māìtihia e te Atua* (Message to God's Chosen People; 1989); *Te pure o te Fatu* (The Prayer "Our Father"; 1992); and *Te Atua e te Natura, te Natura e te Taata* (God and Nature, Nature and the Human Being; 1993).

In this article, I propose to make an anthropological analysis of these works and to offer a perspective on the links between what can already be

characterized as a theology of cultural liberation and the growth of Tahitian nationalism. This article is based mainly on the second and third works of Duro Raapoto. I have had the occasion elsewhere to develop the cultural aspects of the first text (Saura 1989), which offers an insight into Tahitian culture in terms of *hiroà tumu* (original roots) and *iho tumu* (original identity). However, these new words, formed on the basis of traditional terms, come near but do not have quite the same meaning as Western concepts of culture and identity. They correspond more to the concept of *kastom* widely known in Oceania and on which there has been an abundant literature, although not fully appreciated locally.[2]

The millennialistic aspects of Raapoto's booklets might be considered surprising on an island or a group of islands where new millenarian movements never developed to the extent found in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, or New Zealand (see Guiart 1962). But millennialistic tendencies have existed since the nineteenth century in Eastern Polynesia without materializing in the form of new churches or worship movements.

Duro Raapoto's theology has its roots in both a Christian and an indigenous religious tradition, characterized by a fascination with the Old Testament and the fate of the people of Israel.[3] This fascination is expressed by Raapoto through a projection—the nature of which will be discussed below—onto God's chosen people, which is the keystone of his second book.

Since the idea of the millennium constitutes the main thread of this analysis, I return to the widely accepted definition given by Norman Cohn in *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (1957). By that definition all millenarian movements of salvation call for setting up a new order and meet five criteria: (1) salvation is communal, involving a group of elect; (2) it is earthwise, occurring in the real world and not in heaven or elsewhere; (3) it is imminent, bound to happen presently and abruptly; (4) it is total, in the sense that there is perfect order and not simply improvement in present living conditions; and (5) it is supernatural: this radical change should come about through the aid of supernatural powers.

Below I look first at how Raapoto's works constitute a new syncretic and millennialistic rewriting of Tahitian history as well as a rereading of anthropological ideas relative to pre-European society through a reinterpretation of some essential concepts of Polynesian culture. The emphasis in these works is on the prophetic character of this theology, using prophecy of contact (the anticipation of the arrival of Others) as its subject, and on the characterization of Tahitians as the chosen people of God. I will also establish the existing links between this thinking and the growth of nationalism in French Polynesia.

The Works in Brief

Message to God's Chosen People is the work in which the comparison of Tahitians to Hebrews is the most obvious, and the attempt at a historical and theological synthesis of Judeo-Christianity and Polynesian culture the most daring. Raapoto's main theme is God abandoning the Māòhi because of Māòhi rejection of God and embracing of material values, money, and politics. The author also proposes to restore what he calls *te faaroo māòhi mau* (the true Tahitian religion), although this ambiguous term refers more to the existing Polynesian religiousness than to the pre-European Māòhi religion.

The Prayer "Our Father" is a rewriting of the Lord's Prayer.[4] Raapoto's adaptation has two purposes: to be more faithful to the Greek text in the New Testament but also more faithful to the spirit of the prayer, which, according to the author, should affect the Māòhi who utters the words. His work seeks validation of this rewriting through a consistently ethnic interpretation of a state of mind that God has supposedly asked the Māòhi to adopt when praying.[5]

Reconsideration of Some Essential Polynesian Concepts

Pō and Ao

Allan Hanson and Alain Babadzan begin their ethnological studies on the Austral Islands by mentioning the dissociation in Tahitians of a physical or material side *(pae tino)* and a spiritual side *(pae vārua)* (Babadzan 1982:1, citing Hanson 1970). Wanting to see the Kingdom of God established on Tahitian soil, Raapoto opts to reject this separation. In his analysis he comes to reconsider the two concepts of Ao and Pō, which correspond to some degree to those of *pae tino* and *pae vārua.*

The concepts of Pō and Ao have been the subject of several anthropological analyses,[6] which can be summed up as follows: Since the nineteenth century, Ao signifies mainly the day and Pō, the night. However, in ancient times, Pō was also the home of gods, spirits, and ancestors, while Ao was the human world. There was no animosity between Pō and Ao but a communication by a series of intermediate stages. Thus a newborn child coming from Pō went through a series of cleansing ritual ceremonies to protect the already living, while upon his or her death, other ceremonies assured a safe return to Pō:

Ancient Times Conception

Pō →	Ao →	Pō
the universe of spirits and gods	the human universe	the universe of spirits and gods

With the arrival of the missionaries, Pō became synonymous with such concepts as evil ancestors and pagan gods, and ceased to represent an "enchanted religious universe" (Max Weber's words), falling thus into disfavor. Henceforth, and for the first time ever, a god, the only God, Jehovah, brought by the London missionaries, lodged himself in the Ao. This Ao, largely reinterpreted, incarnates light and the new religion that enlightens humankind and frees it from the obscure forces of Pō, the ancestral and diabolical spirits. The Ao is also, in a different sense, the area and time of history:

Conversion to Christianity

Pō (-)	Ao (+)
night	light
traditional religion →	the true God *(te Atua mau)*
devil and evil spirits *(vārua ìno)*	

To be more precise, conversion to Christianity divided the Ao further. From that time on, Ao has been divided into *Ao nei* (the present world on earth) and *Ao mure òre* (the afterlife or the eternal world, the equivalent of the kingdom of heaven, also called *te basileia no te raì).*

Raapoto argues for a return to what he calls the "true Tahitian religion," *te faaroo māòhi mau: mau* meaning "real," but also simply "well anchored"; *faaroo* in its first sense meaning "to hear," but in its Christian interpretation, becoming "religion and obedience." However, the author does not claim a return to Pō per se, but a complete restoration of a religious universe similar to that of ancient times without being that of ancient times. In summary, he does not place his emphasis on a return to traditional religion, but on a religious awakening in Tahitians, mixing consciously and unconsciously the elements of Christianity and the ancient Māòhi customs, and presenting this admixture as "authentic" or true.

According to him, the concept of Pō is far from discounted since it refers back to the religious universe of olden times.[7] The syncretism in his thought is contained in the paradox whereby the universe that he wishes to restore could be called Pō, because Pō is traditionally the spiritual universe, but the influence of his Christian education leads him to call it Ao.

His millennialistic vision of the world drives him, furthermore, to discredit the opposition between the present world *(te ao nei* or *teie nei ao)* and the world of God or eternal life (*te ao mure òre, te ora mure òre).* The objective of his words is to instill in the Māòhi the desire to establish in this world, here and now, a kingdom that reflects the eternal world in the sense that spirit and religion will never be lacking.

This eternity is equated with the realization of paradise or the Kingdom of God on Tahitian land. It is characterized by an abundance of riches and blessings: *te hau,* peace; *te ora,* life; *te hanahana,* glory; *te òaòa,* the joy and happiness felt by human beings and God. Through the achievement of this eternity *(te ao mure òre),* the real world will deserve to be called Ao, for Raapoto a synonym for eternal happiness ("te òaòa mure òre, oia hoì te mea ta tātou i parau e, e ao"; 1989:14), since "the terrestrial world is not the obverse of the celestial or spiritual universe but its reflection" ("te ao ta tātou e ora nei, e ata ia no te ao vārua"; 1989:35); hence the previously mentioned rejection of any dissociation between *pae tino* and *pae vārua.*

Àito *and* Tupuna

The universe and the entities who dwell in it are subject to new definitions, borrowing at the same time from Christian and Polynesian traditions. So it is with the *àito,* ordinarily defined as worthy warriors, champions, and heroes. They are also called *toa.* Raapoto develops a very original view of the *àito* or *toa* that finds its source in his earlier writings on the death of Henri Hiro, another Tahitian poet and apostle of a return to Māòhi culture (*Veà porotetani* 1990:21; Hirshon 1991:79–81).

The author of *Message to God's Chosen People* defines these *àito* as those among Māòhi ancestors *(te hui tupuna)* who respected God's *(Atua metua)* will. Their role was not that of warriors but of messengers of God's will, messengers of the chosen people. As they are among the ancestors, one might expect them to be related to Pō, when in fact they are part of Ao, as they belong to God's *hau* (divine government of peace). Like the saints in Catholicism, they have already gained their place in eternal paradise. One might say that Ao is here equated with Pō, a Pō bereft of those elements that run against the blend of Christian morality and Māòhi values retained by Raapoto.

The *àito* are said to be servants *(tāvini),* elected or chosen by God: "te taata ta te Atua iho i māìti ei tāvini no na" (Raapoto 1989:17). Raapoto creates here a curious mix of elements from the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and traditional Polynesian culture, explaining their designation by means of a new doctrine of Māòhi predestination: "Not everyone

becomes an *àito.* God alone chooses them independently of their actions or the good works that they have accomplished on earth" ("Eita te tāatoàraa o te nūnaa e riro ei Aito. . . . "; 1989:18).

Another syncretic element lies in the fact that *àito* are angels *(mērahi)* (1989:18) that God sent to earth for the sake of the Māòhi, to help ease their pain during their time on earth. They are just guards or watchmen, though. Salvation *(faaaora),* in the sense of giving and preserving life *(ora),* can only come from God. Unlike the angels, archangels, and so on of Catholicism, there is no hierarchy among them. Further, if any of these angels sinned by behaving as mere mortals and not doing God's will, they were pardoned, redeemed, and freed.

Aids of God, the *àito* left their traces *(tāpaò)* on earth, signs that have become enigmas *(piri)* today to the questioning Polynesian. Raapoto writes: "We ask ourselves what human form means in natural elements, what the statues, the *marae*—stones—in the ocean mean. There is not a place on Māòhi land that has not been touched" ("E uiui na tātou. . . . Aita e vāhi tāpaò-òre-hia i nià i te fenua o te Māòhi"; 1989:21). The Māòhi world is therefore enchanted and symbolic. Unfortunately, it seems that natives have turned away from God and lost the knowledge and meaning of these signs.

Nevertheless, the Māòhi are still under the kind care of the *tupuna,* their ancestors, who like the *àito* live in the heavenly world at God's side. These ancestors look at their descendants and feel for them a definite compassion *(arofa),* although they have turned away from God. They, too, sinned before presumably being pardoned by God.

In a convincing manner, Raapoto projects both the Old and New Testaments onto Tahitian history, by imagining that the golden age of the *àito* has given way to the perverted epoch of the ancestors *(te tau o te hui tupuna)* marked by the setting aside of divine teachings: "Moving away from God, they started to carve images in wood and stone, and called them gods" ("No to rātou tāivaraa i te Atua, ua haamata rātou i te tarai i te òfaì e te rāau ta rātou i faariro ei atua no rātou"; 1989:25). Herein lies the explanation for the presence of *tii* (tikis or statues) and other religious carvings before the arrival of the missionaries (these images being largely destroyed at the time of conversion—1815 to 1825—though sometimes paradoxically kept by the same missionaries).

A Millennialistic Rewriting of the Pre-European Past

What Mircea Eliade calls "the nostalgia of origins," a golden age of innocence and real religious consciousness that borrows in a syncretic manner from primitive Tahitian religion and at the same time from Genesis, is one

of the most revealing traits of millennialism in the writings of Duro Raapoto, insofar as he makes a call to restore this paradise (see Eliade 1969). The originality of his work *The Prayer "Our Father"* consists in distinguishing in ancient Tahiti two successive periods: that when the *marae* (open Tahitian stone temples) were pure because they were served only by the high priests and that of the emergence of the religion of the *arii* (chiefs and kings), when religious order was put in the hands of governing men and the *marae* were soiled by the blood of human sacrifice. It is the second period that induces the negative view that many Tahitians have today concerning the *marae:* "teie te tumu i riri noa ai tātou ia faaroo i te parau o te marae . . . " (1992: 65).[8] In distinguishing two separate periods where the missionaries taught Tahitians to recognize only one, Raapoto contests two hundred years of Christian teachings and responds in this way to those who accuse him of advocating a return to the *marae,* understood as a return to paganism.[9]

The period antedating that of the *arii* is said to have been that of the real religion. The *marae,* like an umbilical cord, linked the mother land to the father heaven or to God, permitting humans and God to meet ("I te tau o te mau Tupuna, ua riro te marae ei vāhi moà roa. . . . "; 1992:63). During this era of abundance, God bestowed a vast number of gifts on this land and people. Moreover, this period was supposedly described in Genesis—where Tahiti is not formally mentioned. The implication is that ancient Tahiti resembles in all respects the original paradise, and it rests with the Māòhi of today to recreate the glorious, abundant, and luxurious land described in Genesis. For this purpose, the Māòhi people must renew their relation with God (" . . . i te ìte faahou i te huru ruperupe, te àuhune, e te faahiahia o te fenua ta te Tenete e faateniteni ra, ia taàti-faahou-hia tātou i nià i te Atua . . . "; 1992:42).

In the period of the *arii,* projection through the Old Testament continues with the story of the emergence of a governing body with kings *(arii),* which marks the start of sin, impurity, and the ruin of such values as innocence and sharing. The sacrilege of the *marae* stained with human blood, the beginning of idolatry with the carving of idols of wood and stone, and the fact that the priest *(tahuà),* servant of God, became servant of the king thus pushed God even further from humankind (1992:64).

This rewriting of the Polynesian past is marked by an obvious analogy with the abandonment of the people of Israel by their God. Raapoto is not far removed either from the theory of degeneracy circulated and construed by certain missionaries and evolutionary anthropologists of past centuries who thought that the original people of America or Oceania had known the real God before regressing to paganism and idolatry. This way of thinking coincides with other classic theories in Polynesian ethnology, in particular

with the works of E. S. C. Handy ([1930] 1971), claiming two successive periods in pre-European Polynesian history.[10] But Handy affirms that the emergence of the *arii* was joined with the appearance of the *marae,* whereas in the rewriting of Tahitian history by Raapoto, some place is left for a period of pure religion, an era with temples *(marae)* but without kings *(arii).*

It falls on today's Tahitians to atone for the past sins of their ancestors, linked to the period of the temples. For Raapoto, one of the ways to atone is by prayer. In this regard, one of the great innovations of the new version of the Lord's Prayer is that he proposes to substitute "Faaòre mai i ta mātou tārahu" (cancel our debts) for "Faaòre mai i ta mātou hara" (forgive us our sins). The choice of the word "debts" *(tārahu)* is explained by the fact that *tārahu* is supposed to be close to *ârahu,* which means coal, a reminder that Tahitians have been soiled, tainted, and darkened (the word is used several times in the text) during this phase of their history.

Were the Māòhi physically darkened as was the case with the descendants of Cain and one group of Hebrew people to whom black Americans are related, for example, in the Mormon doctrine?[11] The answer is no, the soiling was purely spiritual even if it encompassed the entire Māòhi population. It is imperative that Tahitians cleanse themselves of these black traces (*ârahu* becoming *tārahu;* 1992:63), which are transmitted from generation to generation, since it is not good to leave such a heritage for their children. Like Israel, whose children still carry the burden of sorrow for the spilling of Christ's blood by their ancestors, today's Māòhi are the inheritors of the debt contracted by their ancestors who soiled the sacred sites and the glory of God on the *marae* (1992:66).

Whatever happened historically before or after the resurrection of Christ, the fact remains that this sin was not cleansed by the blood of the Son of God (1992:61). The ethnic and millenarian theology expounded here distances itself from Christianity, since the salvation of the Māòhi people does not depend on Christ but comes from humanity itself. This collective salvation, an essential element of millennialism, is actually more of a cultural salvation than a spiritual one. But then again, the paradox disappears, since Raapoto does not view Māòhi culture as other than religious.

To return to the ancestral (if not the original) sin of the Māòhi, it would be wrong to think that it suffices to erase, to forget, or to damn these ancestors, because one would be then committing yet another offense at a time when there is already a heavy daily burden for the Tahitians (1992:66). In the likeness of the kings of ancient times who sinned in the eyes of God in wanting to be his equal and in usurping the glory that was God's only, men these days keep accumulating new sins in accepting compromise with political parties, falsehoods, self-debasement, malpractice, and the selling of land

(1992:60). However, the Māòhi people can reconquer their integrity if they turn to God and not to the Western world, the ways of life of the whites. Raapoto affirms this repeatedly: "The Māòhi have never sinned against foreigners or against the missionaries, or against any Westerner [*Popaa* or *Papaâ*] who came to their land" ("Aita te nūnaa Māòhi i tārahu i te rātere, aita o na i tārahu i te mitionare e te mau Papaâ atoà i haere mai io na"; 1992:66).

A major innovation of the book *Message to God's Chosen People* resides in the proclaimed perfect identity between Taaroa and the God of the Hebrews, since God is viewed from an ethnic perspective and through a projection on or an analogizing with the Hebrew culture. Here is the key to understanding the Christianity experienced by the Tahitians since the beginning of the nineteenth century. This assimilation signals the willingness to appropriate Christianity and to put an end to the cultural trauma of the passing from traditional religion to Christianity, reversing nearly two hundred years of teaching.[12]

In Raapoto's texts, there are numerous biblical quotations where the term Jehovah is automatically replaced by Te Tumu Nui (the Great Cause, or the Original Source), one of Taaroa's names.[13] For the author, it is clear that it is the same god, an uncreated *(matamehaì)* God who is the source of all things ("O Taaroa ra, aore ra, Te Tumu, e te Atua e haamorihia nei i teie mahana, hoê anaè ia Atua. . . . "; 1989:30).

One of the reasons for the assimilation flows from the primacy that he gives to the Tahitian language in a linguistic approach of a cultural or relativist type that denies the existence of universal values and poses a perfect symbiosis between Māòhi language and Māòhi culture: "The people of Israel speak of their god by calling him Jehovah, the Father God. The Māòhi say Taaroa, and there is not any difference between one or the other. God gave to each people a mother tongue, and each group of people is free to call God as it likes. Those who knows their native tongue also know the name of their God" (1989:30).

A Prophetic Message That Takes Prophecy as a Subject

There is no doubt a prophetic mode in the writings of Duro Raapoto. I do not mean that this writer is an inspired prophet receiving revelations, but that his writings include a prophetic dimension, although it is necessary to define what is meant by the term. It is especially important to differentiate prophecy from theology, which is not easy in the Judeo-Christian context, since this religion is founded on the prophetic word. But unlike the Christian theologian who repeats and comments on God's plan for all ready to

believe in Him, which plan does consist in believing in Him, the prophet announces specific plans that suit the purposes of a group of men and women to whom God is said to be giving special attention. He or she foretells their destiny.

In *Exaltation of God's Word* and *Traditional Māòhi Identity,* Raapoto tried to reveal to his people what God expects of them. In *The Prayer "Our Father"* the invocation and exhortation address God as well as the Māòhi people. The tone is extremely moralizing, the words of the prophet being highly critical of the directors of the Eglise Evangélique de Polynésie Française.

Not only is this writing of a prophetic nature (even though Raapoto denies it), since the author announces what God wants of his people, but this theme of prophecy is developed in a syncretic reinterpretation of the famous prophecy of Vaitā. In this account God Taaroa did not wait for the Westerners to send the missionaries to put an end to the human sacrifice that soiled the *marae* during the period of idolatry in ancient times. He chose some men as servants to announce his will, to ask the Māòhi to abandon their heathen practices. These men, the *tahuà* (priests), delivered the prophecies *(parau tohu),* Vaitā being the most renowned among them (1989:25).

A priest at Taputapuatea, Vaitā predicted the arrival of both the voyaging Europeans and the missionaries a little before 1767. In the course of a meeting on the *marae* of Taputapuatea, a tornado tore off all the branches of a *tamanu* tree (reputed to be very strong), which caused Vaitā to prophesy: "Here, in front of me, is the explanation of this strange event. The glorious children of Te Tumu will come and see this tree here on Taputapuatea. Their bodies will be different from ours, even though they will look like us as they also come from Te Tumu. They will take our land. This will be the end of our old religion, and the sacred birds of the ocean will come and lament what this lopped-off tree is teaching us" ("Te ìte nei au e. . . . E haere mai e taìhaa i nià i ta teie ràau i motu e haapii nei").

This prophecy, reported by the missionary Orsmond and transcribed by his granddaughter Teuira Henry in *Ancient Tahiti* (1928), is not the only one to have been recorded in Eastern Polynesia. H. A. H. Driessen (1982) mentions different versions of a similar prediction made by Paùe in Haapape (Tahiti), recorded by missionaries Orsmond and Thomson, and compares Vaitā's prophecy as recorded by Orsmond with that of William Ellis. The interesting point in Driessen's article lies mainly in a listing of shipwrecks and recent visits to Polynesia before Wallis's arrival at Tahiti in 1767, which doubtless explains the existence of this prophetic tradition of the first contact.

I do not intend here to analyze the mechanics of the prediction or to try and downplay its spectacular character with a discussion of what "really happened." Yet one can note two contrasting approaches to a historical event: one in which the prediction of an event planned by God is the primary element, with the arrival of the Westerners, which is the historical event, realizing the prophecy; and one that gives primacy to the historical event of the ships' visits, the prophecy being rationalized after the fact, without God's will operating as the cause or even a requisite for its realization.

Raapoto unquestionably adopts the first line of reasoning. The invasion of the Māòhi's land by the Westerners was the product of God's will and a punishment because he was tired of seeing the Māòhi disobey his word. Nevertheless, Raapoto takes pains to distinguish in this prediction what concerns navigators, sailors, tradesmen, and then colonialists, lumped together as the "glorious children of Te Tumu" *(fānauà ùnaùna o Te Tumu),* on one hand, and the missionaries, "sacred birds of the ocean" *(te mau manu moà o te moana),* on the other. It is not evident, however, that the missionaries are not part of the first group of men, since if the prophecy is construed correctly, the breakdown of the traditional religion follows the arrival of the first group. There is nothing that clearly equates the glorious children of Te Tumu with the Westerners without including the missionaries and equates the sacred birds with the latter. But such is his reading of this prophecy, and all kinds of interpretations are possible.

What is certain is that the arrival of the Westerners of the first group *(fānauà ùnaùna)* was the design of God Taaroa. The glorious character of these men comes not only from their wondrous clothing, their strange tools, or their knowledge. It comes also from the love that Taaroa shows for them, for they are his children (1989:27). However, as it turns out, these white children will not behave properly. They were thought to be true brothers, but they proved themselves otherwise: "They did not come to help or aid the native brothers but to separate them from their land" ("Aita i haere mai no te tauturu, no te faatià i te taeaè i roto i te àti, no te haru rā i to na fenua"; 1989:28).

Then came the missionaries, the sacred scarlet birds (purple was the color of the robes of the London Missionary Society pastors), also sent by Taaroa. They "tried to reform the Māòhi in the words of the Christian gospel, but the Māòhi continued to live by the gospel of men, without observing the true religion" (1989:29).

So, the prediction of Vaitā seems to have come true. The land was taken over by strangers, the Māòhi no longer master in their country. The traditional religion collapsed, but the missionaries did not succeed in bringing the Māòhi "back to God." Even though he acknowledges that they failed in

their attempt, former divinity student Raapoto does not attribute a negative role to the missionaries. "The sacred birds of the ocean came to mourn, lament, and bring solace to the Māòhi. This means that they came to give new strength and dignity to the Māòhi, because that was the wish of Taaroa, the wish of Te Tumu" (1989:29).

As is done in many prophetic movements or trends, Raapoto cloaks his own message in the continuity of older prophecies, Vaitā's prediction most particularly.[14] A few years ago, in the poem "E Vaitā i òrero i Taputapuatea," Raapoto questioned Vaitā to find out why he had predicted the death, the disappearance of Māòhi culture and then gone on to prophesy a resurrection of this same culture and this same land. In *Message to God's Chosen People,* Raapoto writes further that Vaitā did not predict the death of the Māòhi ("aita o Vaitā i tohu i te pohe o te Māòhi"), because even though the tree was broken, the roots stayed alive. He adopts yet again the prophetic mood in announcing to Polynesians that they will be saved if they accept belief in God again. Resolutely confident, he reverses the terms of the prophecy to announce a promising future or, more exactly, a promise for the present. It is here and now that the prophecy will come to pass: "Now is the time when all branches will grow again; now is the moment that God wants you to return to him that you may accomplish his will" ("Teie te tau . . . no te faatupu i to na hinaaro ia òe"; 1989:33).

The Tahitians as God's Chosen People

The salvation of the Māòhi is justified, because they are God's chosen people. This affirmation is repeated several times in the texts. In fact, it signifies simply that the Māòhi are basically religious and that God directs his attention toward them as the Māòhi look toward God. This mutual caring is logical in Raapoto's thought processes, in which interactive communication between God and human beings exists, a persistent theme that he develops in all his works. This sacred alliance is materialized in the form of a five-colored rainbow that God displays in the sky for his people (1989:15).[15]

The syncretic beliefs of the Tahitian theologian show up particularly in the parallel he presents between the situation of the Māòhi people and the Israelites in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, the projection is not systematic, as he also establishes the differences between the old elected people and the new one.

The first common point lies in the fact that the Israelites and the Māòhi share the same God. The second is that the Māòhi went through the shock of the white man's arrival and, like the Israelites, were punished *(tāìrihia)*

and abandoned *(faaruèhia)* because of their disobedience toward God. Even today, God abandons and will abandon those who disobey his word and do not fulfill his will (1989:36).

But here ends the parallel. Whereas the Israelites did not heed the words of their prophets, there is still time for the Tahitians to listen to the messages of the prophets of yesterday, such as Vaitā, or those of today announcing to the Māòhi that the time of salvation *(ora faahou)* has come. This salvation is not the same as that of the Israelites. The Israelites did not recognize the Christ when he was announced, and they are still waiting for the arrival of the Messiah and the salvation of the human being through him. However, the Polynesian people are not waiting, the time of salvation has already come for them. This salvation consists in a resurrection but does not take the form of the coming of a Messiah or of a single man. It is the religious and cultural resurrection of a people.

This projection or identification of a people as the people of God needs some clarification, even if it is not something new. It is an essential element in certain millenarian movements, especially those based on Christianity (Wilson 1973; Burridge 1969; Desroche 1969), but not absolutely necessary. Millenarian thought is directed at a group of worshipers or elect, even if these elect do not necessarily represent a people. The idea of "God's people" or a "chosen people" in its national or ethnic dimension is present in Judaism (as opposed to Christianity, in which this expression refers to all believers in God and Christ; see Broomfield 1954). It can also be found among the stories and myths of the American Founding Fathers. Americans were often presented by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers and constitutional scholars as the newly chosen people of God (Tuveson 1968; Handy 1976). The Mormon religion, a product of this millennialistic mold, constitutes the highest form of the theological expression of the American people's mysticism. It is claimed to be contiguous with the history of the Jewish people, although it far transcends it (Arrington and Bitton 1979). Once again, it is worth drawing a parallel between Mormon theology and that of Duro Raapoto. These are two varieties of millennium: in one case, the Americans are pictured as the chosen people of God, and in the other it is the Tahitians.

The same claim to incarnate the chosen people is found in Polynesia, especially within certain millenarian movements based on the rejection of colonization, the most famous of them being the Māori movement Hauhau or Pai Marire in the 1860s (Elsmore 1985; see also Clark 1975). In New Zealand of former times as in the Tahiti of the present era, this roundabout search for ethnic identity through the Hebrew people's history bears witness to a particular reappropriation of the Bible. The stress is laid on the Old

Testament, and this leads up to the syncretic fusion of elements of Polynesian culture and religion, on the one hand, and Judeo-Christian culture, on the other.

In *Message to God's Chosen People,* the meaning of the phrase "the chosen people of God" is clear. Raapoto writes that the time has come for the Tahitians to return to God Taaroa, who has been waiting for this moment, feeling compassion for his chosen as well as regrets for the suffering that he put the Māòhi through when they turned away from him. He gave the Māòhi a language *(reo),* customs *(peu),* and a beautiful, bountiful, and fertile land *(fenua faahiahia)* (1989:23). It is in the restoration of these blessings that the Māòhi return to God.

The way to salvation will by no means be in the adoption of foreign customs, as the Māòhi have tried until now. In fact, it is now apparent that "the worse things are for the Māòhi, the better off Westerners become" ("rahi noa mai to tātou ìnoraa, rahi noa atoà atu to rātou maitaìraa"; 1989:22).

A Return to the "True Māòhi Religion"

Hence Duro Raapoto declares the need for a return to what he terms the "true Māòhi religion" *(te faaroo māòhi mau).* The concept is original, since it establishes a syncretic joining of Christian and Polynesian values that are compatible, leaving aside other characteristics of Christianity and traditional Tahitian religion. It would be more precise to speak of a return to Māòhi religiousness: the restoration of a universe where all makes sense through God's will (that is to say, a spiritual universe) and of a universe of solidarity, mutual help, and fraternity (religion in its social sense).

Precisely to the point, the Māòhi religion is said to be founded, as is Christianity, on charity and love ("niuhia i nià i te aroha e te here"; 1989:22). "These values are those that the Messiah himself brought to the world" ("Taua aroha mau ra e taua here ra ta te Metia iho i haere roa mai faaìte i to te ao"; 1989:45). However, according to Raapoto, these values already existed on Tahiti before Polynesians converted to Christianity. He pushes the logic (and the syllogism) even further, by pointing out that "before the arrival of the missionaries, the word of God" (*te evanelia:* the gospel) "had already been brought to the Māòhi" ("hou te mau mitionare, ua tae ê mai na te Evaneria a te Atua io te Māòhi"; 1989:45–46). With the prophecy of Vaitā, the arrival of Christianity appears to have been embedded in Māòhi history and culture by the will of Taaroa. At the end of *Message to God's Chosen People,* the advocate of the revival of Tahitian religion pursues the point that Christianity is not the only real religion, but merely a historical manifestation of the true religion. Consequently and conversely, it is understood that

the Māòhi are not the only chosen people of God, nor are they charged to replace the Israelites who did not recognize the Messiah. The Māòhi are a chosen people in the sense that they are religion-conscious, a people who believe *(tiàturi)* in God and who are cherished by God in return. This quality of being the chosen people is intrinsic and at the same time something to be conquered.

A Millenarian and Ethnic Theology of Liberation

Until now, I have emphasized the cultural and religious dimensions of this theological system, which presents great anthropological interest. Yet, one should not neglect its political and social sides, which clearly define a theology of liberation, offering evident parallels with other such theologies in South America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania.

In a recent article, Michael Lowy (1990) discusses the blend of modernity and opposition to modernity in the theologies of liberation in South America.[16] Among their elements of modernity one finds the defense of new liberties, interest in social sciences, and criticism of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Catholicism. Their traditional aspects include a sharp criticism of capitalism and individualism, the refusal to confine church activities to the religious sphere, and willingness to recreate a communal life.

In this pattern of thinking, Duro Raapoto's liberation theology is tilted toward the side of traditionalists, if one leaves aside his virulent criticisms of the Tahitian Protestant ecclesiastical authorities. This criticism, when one thinks about it, is part of the Protestant spirit and is apparently accepted, since the works of the Māòhi theologian are printed and distributed by the Eglise Evangélique de Polynésie Française.

On this point, the condemnation of aristocratic government types of ancient times is extended to some contemporary Tahitian pastors of today, who are said to behave as kings ("ua arii te tāvini . . . "; 1992:45) considering others as servants (1992:28). Raapoto also denounces the church for courting the wealthy (1992:44), the church being corrupted by poisoned presents (*taoà tāparu:* money solicited from governing powers). Such money is supposed recently to have silenced church opposition to certain mining and hotel projects in Mataiva, Opunohu, and Tupai, for example (1992:28).[17] He also refers to the diversion of almost US$1 million during the 1980s within the church, with the reminder that, in the primitive church, "punishment was by death to all who took of God's riches" ("e pohe te utuà . . . "; 1992:70).

For the rest, apart from the ecclesiastical questions, this radical theology work is characterized by a wholesale criticism of modernity. It develops first of all an outright rejection of individualism, which goes hand in hand with its

denial of universalism, a logical consequence of cultural relativity. Thus, the Māòhi identity itself is seen as family-based and communal, whereas individualism, a source of selfishness, appears as a Western value: "We have entered into an era marked by greed, selfishness, and torment" ("ua ō tātou i roto i te tau o te pipiri, te popore e te tapitapi, e na te reira e tūìno roa i to tātou oraraa"; 1992:50). Even the Christian prayer "Our Father" is presented as a communal prayer ("e pure teie na te hoê âmuiraa taata"; 1992:52). In agreement with Durkheim's conception, personal faith gives way to a pure religion, social in essence and expression: "In religious worship, one is not required to think but simply to follow the group" ("I roto i te haapaòraa, aita e feruriraa taata tātaì tahi"; 1992:38).

The essential difference between this theology of liberation and that of the Third World lies in the absence of a denunciation of poverty. French Polynesia, a territory financially supported by France, is to all appearances a comparatively rich country in which the economic growth of the last thirty years has been tied with nuclear testing. It has no doubt brought on a spiritual decline and a breakdown in social community relations, but without the dire poverty seen in other countries.

For this reason, the Tahitian theologian has made himself into the advocate of a form of evangelical poverty. He emphasizes the Christian virtue of humility *(haèhaaraa),* which in a syncretic manner becomes a Māòhi value: "God wants the Māòhi because he is humble deep inside" ("te huru mau terā o te Māòhi e te tumu i nounou ai te Atua ia na: no te haèhaa o to na àau"; 1992:74). But this view overlooks such things as pride, haughtiness, obstinacy, exaggeration, and an air of being above it all that could also be called typically Tahitian, especially with reference to the aristocratic society of ancient times. However, this aristocratic society is seen as adrift from and a perversion of "authentic Polynesian values" *(te faufaa māòhi mau),* compatible with the Christian, if not universal, values of compassion and mutual help.

This criticism of money making, individualism, and modernity is made in the specific colonial context of Polynesia and leads to a clear rejection of all that is French. Everything is a pretext for this rejection, including the passage about bread in *The Prayer "Our Father"* (1992:47). Thus Raapoto denounces the alienation of the Māòhi land that became a French colony (*huàrāau:* wood chips), France being the *àihuàrāau,* the intruder who "devours" *(ài)* that land. He also seizes the opportunity to reflect on the term *metua,* meaning "parent(s)" and much used in political speeches in reference to France as the "mother country" *(Hau metua),* as opposed to *Hau fenua* (the Polynesian government, or the Territory of French Polynesia).[18] For him, *metua* is a religious term, synonymous with life and its

origins *(matamua)* (1992:14). Furthermore, he denounces those who think that if France abandons the Māòhi, they will die. They thus demonstrate a lack of confidence and their disbelief in God ("tiàturi-òre-raa i te Atua"; 1992:49).

A Pacific Millenarian Theology

Bearing in mind the criteria of Norman Cohn, in what way does this theology, which has at once political, cultural, and religious facets, also represent a millennialistic thinking of an ethnic type?

The announced and sought after salvation will be collective (the first criterion). It is the salvation of the cherished Māòhi people, God's chosen. Therefore, the Tahitians do not need to bother about that of other peoples whose religiousness is not as strong as theirs: "Do not wait until the whole world unites to prepare the Kingdom of God. We know that, the world over, different nations fight, threaten, and seek to exterminate each other. Just remember the message that the Lord gave to his disciples while he was among them (Mark 6:10–11): 'The land that accepts to embrace the Kingdom of God should do it now' " (1992:73).

This salvation is terrestrial (the second criterion) and will take place on the Māòhi land that people must prepare to realize this kingdom. Curiously, Raapoto does not say that it will happen only in Polynesia, but "it is also in our land that the Kingdom of God will be established" ("e i nià atoà ia to tātou fenua te Hau o te Atua e haamauhia ai"; 1992:73).

It is imminent (the third criterion): "The moment has come to repay our debts. This should not happen after our death but right now, while we are alive" (1992:73). Moreover, Raapoto recalls the verse of Matthew 3:2, "Repent, the Kingdom of God is coming" (1992:34).

It should be complete (the fourth criterion) in order to avoid the risk of God forsaking the Māòhi people, a desertion that has already started (1992:72, 78).

Will this radical change come about with the aid of supernatural powers (the fifth criterion)? This last point raises a problem in the sense that the prophetic message delivered by Raapoto has the Tahitian confronted with responsibility and destiny. Divine intervention makes sense only with an active and determined people. But then even though this theology refers only to God, it expects nothing of God that it has not first asked of the Tahitian people. Just as the figure of Christ is strangely absent, the divinity seems to fade behind humanity. This Kingdom of God, evoked in Christian terms with a great number of biblical verses, is above all the kingdom of the Tahitian people. The most one can do is to acknowledge God's profound desire to meet with the Tahitian people and to see them realizing this kingdom.

A strange ethnic millenarianism is thus sketched out, growing into a sort of ecumenical Māòhi brotherhood in which being part of the Māòhi people transcends and eliminates all denominational barriers: "The kingdom that we are preparing will not be that of Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, or Adventists" (1992:33).[19] Thus the "Tahitian gospels" of Duro Raapoto lay the foundation of a true religion of the Māòhi people.

A Pacific Theology and Its Reception in Tahiti

What has been the impact of this innovating discourse on the Eglise Evangélique de Polynésie Française and in terms of original cultural practices?

First, it is important not to confuse the renewed Māòhi culture, which affects the entire Tahitian society, with this renewed theology that is more recent and limited to the Protestant community. The willingness to return to Polynesian culture initiated by Henri Hiro and Duro Raapoto in the 1970s is well entrenched in the church, especially with the introduction of traditional dancing, which was until then completely incompatible with the canons of Christian morality. In contrast, Raapoto's attempt at a theoretical synthesis of Christianity and Māòhi culture is essentially a discourse. This discourse, marginal in the late 1980s, is gaining ground among the clergy as the younger generation is becoming more and more concerned with culture. To understand this, one only needs to survey the evolution in the themes and contents of the dissertations of theology students at the Protestant seminary of Heremona in Tahiti. For all this, this Māòhi theology is far from being unanimously accepted by local Protestant clergymen, including Tihiri Lucas. This young pastor takes a stand in his sermons against Raapoto's writings and ideas.

When it comes to actual practices, the 1970s and 1980s saw the acceptance and introduction within the church of traditions and cultural dances that had been considered tabu by the first missionaries. However, religious rituals inside the church remain formally Christian. Toward the end of the 1980s, much like Raapoto, several of his followers started wearing the *pareu* in church. This way of dressing, even if followed only by a minority of faithful and pastors, sometimes caused virulent reactions from other parish members. Thus, in *The Prayer "Our Father,"* Raapoto in several instances attacks the pastors, deacons, and all those who turn away from the temples parishioners wearing a *pareu* (1992:19, 33)

Direct theological influence can also be identified in the recent use of the name Te Tumu Nui (the Great Cause) instead of Jehovah in Tahitian prayers, sermons, and hymns. In the church of Afareaitu, on Moorea Island, for example, this use is widespread. Elsewhere, it varies according to personalities and the type of ceremony.

More common is the reinterpretation of Polynesian history as seen through the prism of Christianity. In historical reproductions and shows organized by the various parishes, the Protestant Church plays down the polytheist dimension of ancestral Tahiti. The accent is placed on the creator god Taaroa, presented as the equivalent of Jehovah. Scarcely any mention is made of the god of war Òro, who was the main divinity on Tahiti and Raiatea at the time of the arrival of the Westerners.

Duro Raapoto is not the first theologian in the Pacific area to attempt a theoretical synthesis of Christianity and indigenous culture. Since the 1960s, years that correspond with both the first accession to political independence in the islands and the full autonomy or independence of local churches from Western churches, a large-scale movement for reappropriation of Christianity has been spreading in the Pacific. Some have gone so far as to refuse a compromise with theology and to call for a return to the pre-Christian religions, leaving out their sacrificial aspects. With respect to these "black theologies from the Pacific," I refer to the works of Garry Trompf, dealing mainly with Melanesia (Trompf 1987; Loeliger and Trompf 1985).

In the Polynesian area, the leading proponent of a revived culture and cult is the Methodist pastor of Tonga Sione Amanaki Havea. His works present striking analogies with those of Raapoto. Like the latter, Havea asserts that the gospel was already present in Polynesia before the coming of the missionaries. But Havea shows more prudence in admitting that this presence was subconscious and more daring in saying that the scenes of Pentecost or Christ's sacrifice had a worldwide effect that included the Pacific Islands. This idea of a simultaneous worldwide redemption in Christ is one of the strong points of his thinking. He is also known for his "Coconut Theology," in which he affirms that "incarnation and immaculate conception are in the coconut tree," the basis of life and salvation for the Polynesians.[20]

The theology of the coconut in Tonga is like the theology of rice in Asia. In spite of the geographically different locales, the idea is identical: to make Christianity "native." In certain strongly acculturated Pacific islands such as New Zealand and French Polynesia, these new ways of referring to the divinity also present a particularity in that Christian culture serves as an instrument for the resurrection of ancient culture.

Throughout the Pacific, these theologies have an obvious political dimension. They are resolutely pacifist. Because land is a gift of God, nuclear tests (American in Micronesia, French in Polynesia) are harshly condemned.[21] An oft-recurring theme in Raapoto's works is that of cleanliness and the need to cleanse the land of its sins and faults. The colonial powers are clearly associated with death: "When God abandons us, our lands are confiscated, and foreigners are coming in great numbers, sorrow, pain, and death multiply" ("Ia faaruè mai te Atua ia tātou, te haruhia nei te fenua"; 1989:40).

In Tahiti, the denunciation of nuclear testing by the Protestant community resulted in a fusion of Jewish and Māòhi myths of creation in which land is the womb, Mother Earth who gives birth to humanity. This type of representation is not specific to Duro Raapoto or Henri Hiro. On 21 September 1995, the president of the Eglise Evangélique, Jacques Ihoraì, visited French president Jacques Chirac to convey the strong opposition of Polynesia's Christians to the last series of nuclear tests on Moruroa and Fangataufa. A Protestant journalist at *Réforme,* a witness to the meeting, reports that

> President Ihoraì astonished his interlocutor by saying: "Mister President, you do not have the right to explode bombs in the nourishing womb of our motherland, Earth. Peace can never be established on the basis of nuclear menace. You reject me as a man and as a Polynesian if you say that Tahiti is France." Jacques Chirac is at first tense but attentive. He brings up several points: "Is this notion of Mother Earth really Christian? Aren't the pastors inspired or influenced by the notion of independence?" Then followed an explanation by Pastor Teinaore on contextual theology.[22]

In fact, although the protest was observed with interest by Chirac, it did not change his decision to resume the last series of nuclear tests.

Religion, Cultural Revival, and Tahitian Nationalism

The radical writings of Duro Raapoto are the expression, in the field of theology, of an ethnic and millenarian thought that one can also find in other areas of Tahitian life, especially in the reawakening of Māòhi culture and in political speeches encouraging independence.

Since the 1970s, the call for a return to Polynesian culture and customs has become a dominant factor in Tahiti. It manifests itself in native dances and contemporary songs as well as sincere efforts in plays and movies. Tattooing, an ancient custom that all but disappeared in the nineteenth century, has had a significant rebirth. In the domain of traditional dancing, bodily emancipation manifests itself in suggestive movements and scantily clad dancers. This marks a definite break with the puritanism inherited from the missionaries of the last century. Still, the restoration of the body cult is not devoid of religious justification in the sense that it is a tie with ancient culture and thus a gift of God. Paradoxically, the Christian message remains indissolubly linked to the idea of returning to the sources and to a claimed "authentic Māòhi spirituality."

The best examples of this reconciliation between Christian values and

traditional culture are found today in songs popularizing the themes and phraseology of the ethnic discourse, with its growing millennialistic character. For many years now, Tahitian composers have profusely celebrated the stunning beauty of their land as well as the physical and spiritual qualities of its people, a people chosen or indulged by God. These compositions borrow as freely from tourist slogans as from the Bible, diverted from its universal meaning to promote ethnic values.[23] In songwriting, a major domain of local creativity, the message becomes outright apocalyptic when it denounces Tahitians who succumb to materialistic values pertaining to modernity, to the Western way. One of the musical hits in 1995 was a tape recorded by the group Te ava piti, in which the main song "A tātarahapa" ("Repent!") opens with the words "No òe, e toù nūnaa i teie mahana, tāpaò no toù aroha ia òe. Eiaha e faaea e tiàturi i te Atua, nā na e arataì ia òe i roto i teie ao" (To you, my people—*nūnaa*—today, my sign of affection for you. Never cease to believe in God, it is He who guides you in this world—*ao).* The title of this song could be considered pessimistic if it was not actually a cry of hope in the context of the millenarian and ethnic ideas presented previously. The refrain confirms it: "A tātarahapa, a tātarahapa, te fatata mai ra hoì te basileia no teie ao" (Repent, repent, the kingdom of this world is near).[24]

The blending of the Māòhi spiritual quest, millenarian and apocalyptic speeches, and the denunciation of decadent Franco-Tahitian politics is epitomized in the compositions of Angelo Neuffer Ariitai, the leading singer of the young generation. This apostle of indigenous values who sings only in Tahitian, with a semimodern accompaniment, has enjoyed immense popularity since the middle of the 1980s. His recorded tapes "Te'ote'o" ("Teòteò," Pride; 1987) and "Te mana" (The Power, in a spiritual sense; 1989), which associate his voice with that of Bobby Holcomb (see Saura 1992), another figure of the Māòhi revival, continue to break sales records. The leading titles are "Tūramarama i te fenua" (Illuminate the Land with a Torch), "Te mana e te hanahana" (The Power and the Glory), "Te maitaì e te ìno" (Good and Evil), and "Tupuna" (Ancestors). Other songs of Angelo's from the same period are in the same spirit: "I te mau ànotau hopeà" (In the Time of the End) and "Te pure o te àau" (The Prayer of Heart and Soul). In 1992 appeared his tape "Perofeta no te hoo" (Prophets of Money), which gives a warning to those who acquire debts in sacrificing their culture on the altar of money. Another song is titled "Te tumu" (The Cause [or origin], another name—as with Raapoto—for the God Taaroa, who is supposed to be the equivalent of Jehovah). In 1993 Angelo produced the tape "Nūnaa no ânanahi" (People of Tomorrow) and in 1995 "Arioi" (the name of the god Òro's servants in traditional Tahitian society).

Angelo's phraseology in his songs can be summarized in about twenty key

words that are also used by Raapoto and others: particularly *Māòhi* (Aboriginal), *taata* (human being), *hiroà tumu* (culture), *iho tumu* (identity), *natura* (nature), *here* (love), *Atua* (God), *ao* (universe), *fenua* (land), *reo* (language or voice), *tupuna* (ancestors), *vārua* (spirits), *peu* (customs), *tiàturiraa* (confidence), *faatura* (respect). These terms commingle and complement each other in such expressions as *natura taata Māòhi* (Māòhi human nature) or *fenua tupuna* (ancestral land).

Was there direct influence by Raapoto's works or simply the coincidence of two sets of writings informed by the same search for identity? Certain phrases of Angelo's unquestionably derive from the lexicographical creations undertaken by Duro Raapoto and Henri Hiro in the 1970s. These words are now part of everyday life and conversation, and no longer specific to the theologians, let alone to Angelo. They allow people to avoid the use of Western terms (such as "nature," "culture," "identity") to express generic concepts that did not make sense in former times but have acquired a significance in today's society. Words such as *natura* are clearly neologisms.[25] Even so, the musical compositions of Angelo are set off from those of other Tahitian composers by this pervasive ethnic and religious vocabulary. The words make up a hermetic and codified discourse, and the poet seems reluctant to depart from this activist approach. The paradox is that Angelo is an easygoing person whose strict lyrics contrast with his congenial personality.

Many other local singers since the end of the 1980s have taken part in this religiouslike celebration of Māòhi identity: Aldo Raveino with his group Manahune (in ancient times, the name for lower-class society), Rasta Nui, Tapuarii Laughlin, and more recently a Tahitian hard rock group called Vārua ìno (Evil Spirit), whose name caused some commotion in the Catholic community of Tahiti in 1996.[26] All these artists denounce the corruption of political mores, the loss of traditional values, and so forth. What an enormous difference from the light-hearted songs of the 1960s celebrating happy parties, Hinano beer, and stories of lovely *vahine* and sailors. I have purposely left aside composers of traditional dance music to focus on youth and local popular music. The words in these songs are what the Tahitian population listens to daily, and there is good reason to believe that they express the ideas and preoccupations not only of their authors, but also of a large part of the younger generation in Tahiti.

Besides the areas of theology and popular songwriting, the ethnic and religious Māòhi message has found its way into pro-independence speeches bearing the same millenarian dimension, with a less syncretic and more markedly Christian character.[27] The main pro-independence party obtained 27.1 percent of the votes in Tahiti and Moorea and an average of 20 percent in the other archipelagoes in the 1996 territorial elections. The name of this

party, Tāvini Huiraʻatira (or Huiraatira) no te Ao Māòhi translates as "to minister to and serve the population of the Māòhi world." The term *tāvini* is essentially part of the Christian vocabulary. Before opting for a democratic system at the end of the 1980s, the staunchly Catholic founder of this party, Oscar Temaru, was its "president for life," which gave him the image of a messiah *(Metia)* or a *Metua* (protecting father), another marked religious term.

Initially, Oscar Temaru launched protests against nuclear testing, before conducting an all-out campaign to clean up the territory. For the 1993 legislative elections, his party used as its emblem a broom made of the backs of coconut fronds *(niàu).* Today, the Tāvini Huiraatira's discourse is based entirely on moral order, the need to end the corruption of the political elite and to return to traditional, Christian, and family values. The party professes pacificism and sports a light blue and white flag.

In the party members' vocabulary is found the same insistence on cleanliness *(mā)* and dignity *(tiàraa),* the two terms forming *tiàmāraa,* which means independence.[28] As with the words of Raapoto, but in a more materialistic and economic sense, the party conveys the idea that the Māòhi are not indebted to foreigners; in fact, foreigners are indebted to them for having ravaged their land. It is France who is pillaging the Māòhi land.[29] The argument would be simply political but for a millenarian aspect essential to independentist speeches: the nostalgia of origins, the myth of a rich and abundant land and life-giving unpolluted sea with the end of colonization.[30]

If Raapoto's theology of social and political liberation and cultural rebirth ties in well with the progress of Tahitian nationalism, still it remains in the domain of theology.[31] It is marked by a dismissal of politics, which is always associated with money and corruption, undoubtedly the reaction of a figure of Tahitian religious life to the contemporary all-important domination of politics.

The appearance of organized political life in French Polynesia dates back no further than 1945. I have shown that if, socially and culturally speaking, the political sphere takes shape on a religious basis, its monopolistic pretensions and its openings to Western modernity can easily engender hostile attitudes among the clergy. Because it stands in the line of millenarian thinking, Raapoto's theology leaves open the possibility of a complete disappearance of the political sphere and concurrently of the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

Conclusion

One can identify then the recent emergence and development in Tahiti of a millennialist way of thinking expressed initially within the circle of Protes-

tant theologians, but whose influence and significance extend to cultural and political life in a broader sense. Despite its somewhat disconcerting innovations, this theological discourse is gaining ground in people's minds, because it systematically gathers sparse elements of Polynesian culture. It assembles them in a coherent structure that could be called an ideology, according to the definition given by Althusser in *For Marx* (1965): "An ideology is a system of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts), possessing its own logic and rationality, which is lent a life of its own and an historical role in a given society."

This definition must be completed with the analysis of Georges Balandier, in *Sens et puissance,* regarding the connection between mythical thinking and the reaction to colonial oppression: "The colonial apparatus, no matter what kind of domination, aims at freezing local political life, as it were. If it were so, it is understandable that the modern political agendas of natives, determined by the colonial situation, were in the first place expressed through the medium of myth and hidden under the veil of mythology." It is only later that political ideologies will appear: "the passage from myth to political ideologies or to ideologies with political implications happens when calls for self-administration and for independence are made" (Balandier 1986:211).

Deprived of real political life before 1945, French Polynesia was untouched by prophetic, messianic, or millenarian movements with a political dimension. Today it is witnessing the emergence of ideologies with a marked political character, which do not exclude myth making.

The ideological dimension of Duro Raapoto's work has been largely established, but its historical role, its contribution to changes to come in the Tahitian society, can only be assessed in the future. In spite of his efforts to be strictly religious and his cry for dissolving the political sphere, Raapoto's works seem bound to give force mainly to a political nationalistic ideology.

Will this theology become a dominant factor within the Protestant Church of Tahiti, or will it give rise to the creation of minority communities, if not dissenting ones? It seems that there is an opportunity here to improve on the famous distinction that Sundkler established between Ethiopian churches and Zionist churches: "the first ones are inspired by Western churches with which they compete, and they may become a shelter for nationalism; churches of the second type, prophetically inspired and with a popular following, only think of escaping from this world, not to gain power by rational procedures" (Laburthe-Tolra 1993:245; Sundkler 1961). In the case of Tahiti, here is an example of how a Zionist Pacific theology addresses itself to a newly chosen people, staying away from politics and power, and yet fashioning a discourse that fosters indigenous nationalism.

NOTES

There are two main orthographies for Tahitian: the scientific one of the Tahitian Academy, which uses a glottal stop between two vowels and is the official *graphie* of the Territory of French Polynesia (used in schools and the university); and that of Duro Raapoto, which is the official orthography within the Protestant Church (and also accepted by more and more teachers, as it is easier to read for those who speak the language, though not for others).

For reasons of clarity, Raapoto's orthography has been used in this article for all Tahitian words. In Raapoto's system, a glottal stop between two *different* vowels becomes a grave accent on the second vowel, if this vowel is short (e.g., *ti'a* becomes *tià*). A glottal stop between two vowels that are the *same* is dropped if the second vowel is short (*ta'ata* becomes *taata*). If a vowel following a glottal stop is long, that vowel is written with a circumflex (*ta'a'ē* becomes *taaê; 'ārahu* becomes *ârahu*).

1. Normally, printings of written works published in Tahiti (poetry, novels, and essays) total two thousand copies maximum, and they are usually in French. Duro Raapoto's writings circulate within the network of Protestant churches in the five archipelagoes of French Polynesia, where they are sent to be sold at a relatively modest price (CFP 500; US$5.00). His ideas are also widely publicized in the monthly magazine of the Protestant Church of French Polynesia, *Veà porotetani* (The Protestant News), with a monthly circulation of five thousand, to which he often contributes his writings.

2. For instance, see the special issue of *Mankind,* vol. 13, no. 4 (1982); Keesing 1989; and Linnekin 1990:149–173.

3. The explanation that contemporary preoccupation with the millennium is merely the product of a two-hundred-year-old missionary heritage is not satisfactory. As a comparison, it would be unsatisfactory to read into the Mamaia (a Tahitian millennialist saga of the 1820s) the mere influence of teachings by pastors from London, even if Niel Gunson (1962) argued persuasively that these pastors did believe in the millennium and would on occasion preach its doctrines. However, the Mamaia had something to do with a native millenarianism, as its prophets used Christian doctrine and twisted it into an antimissionary movement. In the same way, the way of thinking arising today within the Tahitian Protestant Church does not deal only with theology. It constitutes a religious reaction to sociocultural changes and political domination, which account for its appearance and give it its full meaning.

4. Below extracts from *Message to God's Chosen People* will be designated by the year 1989 and those quoted from *The Prayer "Our Father"* by the year 1992.

5. The term "ethnic" is used in the sense of "relative to the native Tahitian population" of racial-ethnic origin, including mixed-blood Tahitians. However, this is my definition; for Raapoto, Polynesian biological roots must go hand in hand with speaking the language and other practices in order for a Māòhi truly to deserve that name.

6. See Bausch 1978 and, for a review of this article, Babadzan 1982:124–129.

7. Here in *Message to God's Chosen People* he translates the title of Teuira Henry's book *Ancient Tahiti,* which has become the bible of pre-European Tahiti experts, as *Tahiti i te pō,* "Tahiti of the dark," meaning the (religious) Tahiti of ancient times.

8. In the minds of Tahitian people, the *marae* are intimately tied to religion and rites (human sacrifices) that occurred in ancient times. But one should not neglect their social and family dimension. Marau Taaroa, the last queen of Tahiti, points this out in her *Memoirs* (1971). Paul Ottino (1965) notes that in one Tuamotu atoll, the word *marae* applies to all ceremonial sites, including areas for eating fish, nocturnal group singing, and games for children, men, and women.

9. There is a diffuse feeling of rejection, or at least of suspicion, toward this cultural revival, especially among Tahitians over sixty or those in rural communities who were unconcerned by the identity revival that appeared in the 1960s and 1970s in urban and intellectual communities. Among these people, the fear of regressing, of returning to pagan times, is, however, counterbalanced by a specifically Tahitian turn of mind (see Levy 1973: 266–267) that leads them to downplay the novelty of this theology, which, like any product of the thought process, is perceived as a personal construction. This turn of mind actually facilitates the acceptance of such theology, at least temporarily, for lack of other thought models that are as well structured and accessible in the Tahitian language.

With regard to the tremendous changes taking place in the indigenous view of their own ancestral past, the 1990s have been marked in French Polynesia both by the reinforcement of a feeling of suspicion toward modernity and by the generalization of a push to develop tourism, which is integral to modernity but has also resulted in the restoration of traditional cultural sites. All in all, the way today's Tahitians look at their pre-Christian past and at the sites and artifacts related to that past has become more complex and less Manichaean than the perspective they inherited by absorbing missionary values in the nineteenth century.

10. On the basis of oral Polynesian traditions, notably those recorded in the *Memoirs* of Marau Taaroa (1971), Handy distinguished a primitive Tahitian culture, that of the *manahune*, which was to be replaced by the society of the *arii.* This hypothesis, discarded ever since, stands in a line of earlier speculations (Churchill and Dixon) in the field of linguistic studies and folklore. In the 1960s, French archaeologist Jean Garanger clearly established that the *marae* did not appear in the Society Islands until about the thirteenth century.

11. It is not until 1978 that black people become members of the priesthood within the Mormon Church, the reason being that they are the descendants of Cain (Genesis 4:11) or Cham (one of Noah's three sons, Genesis 9:18–29; the two other brothers of Cham were Sem, the ancestor of the Semites, and Japhet, the ancestor of the Gentiles).

12. It is the same logic that pushed the people of Rurutu (Austral Islands) at the beginning of the nineteenth century to reinterpret the myth of Amaiterai in such a way that this local hero was supposed to have left his island for England in search of the real god *(te atua mau)* before the English missionaries arrived in Polynesia. This interpretation is intended to ensure compatibility between the ancient pagan and the new Christian histories of their island. See Babadzan 1982.

13. Anyway, writes Raapoto, it is not really the name of God that is important when one recites *"ia moà to òe iòa"* ("hallowed be your name") but the person behind the name, "because we seek not to worship one of his names, but the fact that he is God" ("eere atoa . . . "; 1989:30). In reaction to this claimed assimilation between Jehovah and Taaroa—"heretical" or "pagan" to some Tahitians—some Protestants prefer to join the Church of Jehovah's Witnesses, in which worshipers are proud to use the name Jehovah.

14. The prophetic continuity is evident in the biblical text in the succession of prophets in the Old Testament and the announcement of the coming of the prophet Jesus. In Polynesia the most striking continuity finds its place within the Ringatu movement in New Zealand with the announced coming of the prophet of the years 1860–1870, Te Kooti, followed in turn by Rua Kenana at the beginning of the twentieth century. See, for instance, Binney 1984.

15. The rainbow is a fairly universal symbol, present in the Bible (in the episode of the deluge, Genesis 9:8–17, and in Ezekiel 1:28) as well as in the Tahitian tradition: the rainbow of the god Òro is used by the latter to go to Bora Bora to fetch his beloved Vairaumati (who inspired a Gauguin painting).

16. For practical purposes, I employ the term "modernity" without taking up again the debate on the definition of modernity, ultramodernity, postmodernity, or supramodernity.

17. Here, I have doubts about the objectivity of the theologian. He is mixing together very different issues over which the Protestant Church has not always stayed silent. The first two cases consist of development projects rejected by some of the population in the name of environmental defense and the "traditional" way of life: in Mataiva, Tuamotu, a project that has been scheduled (but not started yet) involving phosphate extraction from the lagoon and in Opunohu, Moorea, a Japanese golf course project on government land (a project finally rejected by a local referendum on Moorea Island). The Eglise Evangélique de Polynésie Française has for a long time condemned these two projects. The one that concerns Tupai, the private property of a wealthy notary from Papeete, consisted in 1990 of a Japanese project to build giant tourist facilities including an international airport for direct flights between Tokyo and Tupai. There are only about twenty people on Tupai Island, even though there are many land claims.

18. In the same vein, independence leader Oscar Temaru contested the use of the term *Metua* (the father) in referring to French president Mitterrand. See Saura 1993:68.

19. The same idea appears in *Message to God's Chosen People* (pp. 38–39). According to the author, the Māòhi of today change churches easily and worship in turn the God of Mormons, the God of Catholics, and so on. (This is a moot point, as the conflict between those who change churches and their original church implies a break with a given ecclesiastical and social community, not the choice of a different God.) He then establishes a parallel with the Tahitian tendency of changing political parties, each party trying to gain the monopoly of good, exactly as each church tries to gain the monopoly of God. Knowing his rejection of politics, one can surmise that in his eyes, the plurality of Christian religions is itself a threat, an element of division in the Māòhi people. Religious diversity, interpreted by him as a kind of paganism ("the God of Mormons, the God of Catholics"), clashes with his own goal of bringing the Māòhi people back to one God, Jehovah or Taaroa.

20. Cited by the Tahitian pastor Joël Hoiore (1992:60), who in his Ph.D. thesis analyzes the writings of Raapoto and Havea.

21. See the dissertation of the Tahitian divinity student Paroe Frederik Teriiatetoofa (1988); see also the numerous works of geographer Gabriel Tetiarahi, head of the Working Committee on Land Rights within the Protestant Church of Tahiti and the current chairman of the Piango nongovernmental organization network in the Pacific. See, for example, the text in which he takes up again the prophecy of Vaitā (Tetiarahi 1994).

22. Article reproduced in *Veà porotetani* (Papeete), November 1995:5.

23. In his writings, Raapoto does not miss the opportunity to recall how much Polynesia is admired and desired by foreigners, which reinforces his conviction that the Tahitians are God's chosen people.

24. The paradox of Tahitian society resides in the fact that songs of this type with a serious message are sung in public dances as well as in family parties and get-togethers by inebriated singers without any apparent interest in religion. It would be wrong, though, to think that these same singers do not ponder their meaning when they are sober. These songs are the temper of the times and expressive of a not-so-festive mood.

25. And yet Raapoto titles one of his works *Te Atua e te Natura, te Natura e te Taata* (1993).

26. That long-haired youths of the younger generation would dare use a name with such negative connotations and fraught with missionary ideology to name a hard rock group shows undeniably the evolution of Tahitian society. Facing what they perceived as a new sign of declining moral values, Christian associations organized a pacific demonstration in early 1996 at Tarahoi Square in Papeete.

27. Oscar Temaru, to revive these elements of the pre-European past during the legislative election campaign in 1993, appeared on some occasions wearing a belt of red material signifying the *maro ùra* (the sacred emblem of power of the ancient Tahitian chiefs). The *maro ùra* of Temaru became the symbol of restored sovereignty in a modern sense, established on the basis of the five archipelagoes of a nation-state in the making rather than the traditional chieftainships.

28. *Tiàmāraa* means independence in the moral and political sense. From an institutional point of view, one could say, for example, *faataaêraa* (separation).

29. A pillage illustrated by the exploitation of the two-hundred-mile maritime zone or the setting up of Loto (lotto), a game extremely popular with the Tahitians, with the receipts mainly filling the coffers of the French National Society of Games in Paris.

30. For comparison, on using the Bible and the idea of expelling the whites in prophetic and messianic African movements, see Balandier 1986:208–214.

31. And, one could add, the domain of Protestant theology, since members of other churches do not read these writings. However, schoolteachers of the Tahitian language

are familiar with other works by the same author dealing with language, culture, the family, and "Māòhi values," which their students read more or less willingly and voluntarily. Raapoto holds a unique de facto position of power, both intellectual and hierarchical, in the public school system as well as in Protestant private schools. His influence is less, however, within the Department of Polynesian Languages of the French University of the Pacific of Tahiti.

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