

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION IN NAFE (KWAMERA): WILLIAM WATT'S TRANSLATIONS AND LOANWORDS

Lamont Lindstrom  
*University of Tulsa*

*Dedication: To John Lynch, iema asori sai nagkiariien me Ipare, who reveals the way to Tanna and its languages.*

William Watt, Presbyterian missionary on Tanna (1869–1910), published a Nafe (Kwamera) language translation of the KJV New Testament in 1890. He had earlier produced Kwamera versions of the Gospels as soon as linguistic skills permitted, but the full New Testament translation was not completed until the late 1880s and printed in Glasgow during a mission leave (1889–1890). Watt worked with island pundits, and he relied on his wife Agnes's linguistic expertise. Revelation's allusions and obscurities presented significant difficulties of translation. I offer a close reading of Watt's translated book of Revelation—*Nari Kenamsasani* (sasani means “display”)—tracking his grammatical choices, his translation decisions given structural divergences of source and target languages, transliterations and loanwords that he borrowed from Biblical English or nineteenth century Bislama, and finally how Revelation may have resonated with island culture. Tanna's celebrated John Frum Movement prophecies, like John of Patmos, also foretold a New Heaven and New Earth.

ROMAN CATHOLIC, LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY, and Presbyterian missionaries opened stations in the New Hebrides beginning in the early 1840s. The Protestants, in particular, embraced Bible translation, schooling, and literacy as key elements of Christian proselytization and conversion. They devised orthographies for island languages and published Vanuatu's first books on small hand presses, mostly translations of the New Testament and other

Christian and pedagogical material. Among these was Presbyterian missionary William Watt who, with his wife Agnes, sought souls on Tanna between 1869 and 1910. In 1890, Watt published a Kwamera (Nafe; nife “what”; International Organization for Standardization 639-3 code TNK) language translation of the KJV New Testament (*Nagkirien Ruvani Sumun Savi Savei Yerumanu Saketaha Ketir Ramavahi Umuru Ketaha: Kavahi Nagkirien Kris, Karaipen ya Nagkirien Kamani Kwamera, Tana Ipare, Nyu Hebrides*—a long title that translates as “New agreed words of our Lord, the person who brings life to us: Obtained in Greek language, written into [translated] the language one calls Kwamera, Tanna Ipare [a local name for the island], New Hebrides,” perhaps reflecting the King James Bible title page’s assertion, “Translated out of the Original tongues”).<sup>1</sup>

A close reading of Watt’s translation of Revelation (*Nari Kenamsasani*—*sasani* means “display, reveal”), the Christian Bible’s final and notorious book, provides evidence of Watt’s linguistic and translation skills, including the choices he made when faced with structural divergences between source and target languages (cf. Geraghty 2003 on inexact Fijian Bible translations). Watt’s code-mixings of loanwords borrowed from English, the Bible itself, and nineteenth century Bislama index cultural changes then underway on the island, reflecting several decades of intensifying contact with the outside world, including enthusiastic islander participation in Southwest Pacific labor recruiting. A close reading of Revelation also identifies resonances between the Apocalypse and subsequent social organization on Tanna. Revelation continues to echo through island projects.

### William and Agnes

John Williams, the London Missionary Society’s traveling missionary, on November 18, 1839, moored the mission ship *Camden* in Port Resolution, an east Tanna bay that James Cook had named after his second expedition’s flagship. Williams hobnobbed with local folk, exchanging gifts of cloth, mirrors, beads, and trinkets. Although no one onboard understood the local Nafe language, visitors from neighboring Futuna (where people speak a Polynesian language related to Samoan) were then common at Port Resolution. Williams understood islanders to welcome missionaries, and he left three Samoan teachers at Port Resolution. Two days later, he was clubbed to death at Dillon’s Bay, Erromango (the next island to the north of Tanna), and was apparently eaten, along with his secretary James Harris. This spurred the LMS to boost its efforts, and missionaries George Turner and Henry Nisbet sailed back to Port Resolution in 1842, holding out there for several months until hostile relations forced a retreat. They produced,

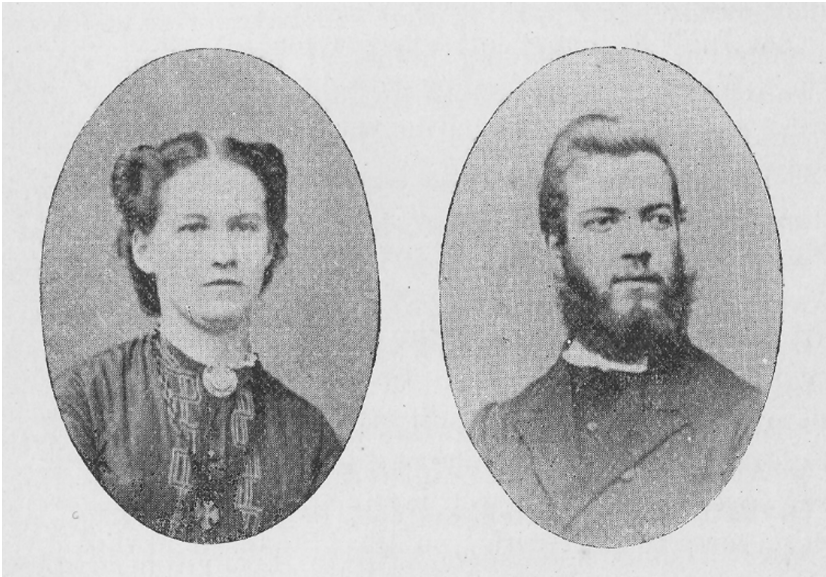


FIGURE 1. **William and Agnes Watt.**

during these months, catechisms and some pedagogical material, although these were muddled. Their accompanying teachers spoke Samoan and thus heard Nafe through that language's phonological and morphological systems (see Ferguson 1918: 17–24 and Lynch and Crowley 2001: 130–131 for records of early Kwamera/Nafe publication).

Presbyterian missionaries including John Paton followed in 1858. Paton, too, clashed with islanders, who blamed missionaries and other visiting Europeans, with good reason, for a series of epidemics that would kill perhaps half of the island's people. He evacuated to Australia in 1862 and, in 1869 in New Zealand, arranged for publication of a few translated chapters from the book of Mark (Murray 1888, 150). In 1868, the mission restaffed, sending Thomas Neilson and wife Lucy Geddie Neilson back to Port Resolution. A year later, William and Agnes Watt arrived to set up at Kwamera, twelve miles to the south, near Tanna's southern point (Fig. 1). Watt assumed supervision of the Presbyterian establishment at Port Resolution when the Neilsons left in 1882. The Watts eventually relocated from Kwamera to Port Resolution in 1891 (Miller 1986, 246). Agnes died there in 1894 and William, in 1900, married again, had two children, and retired with his family to Victoria, Australia, in 1910.

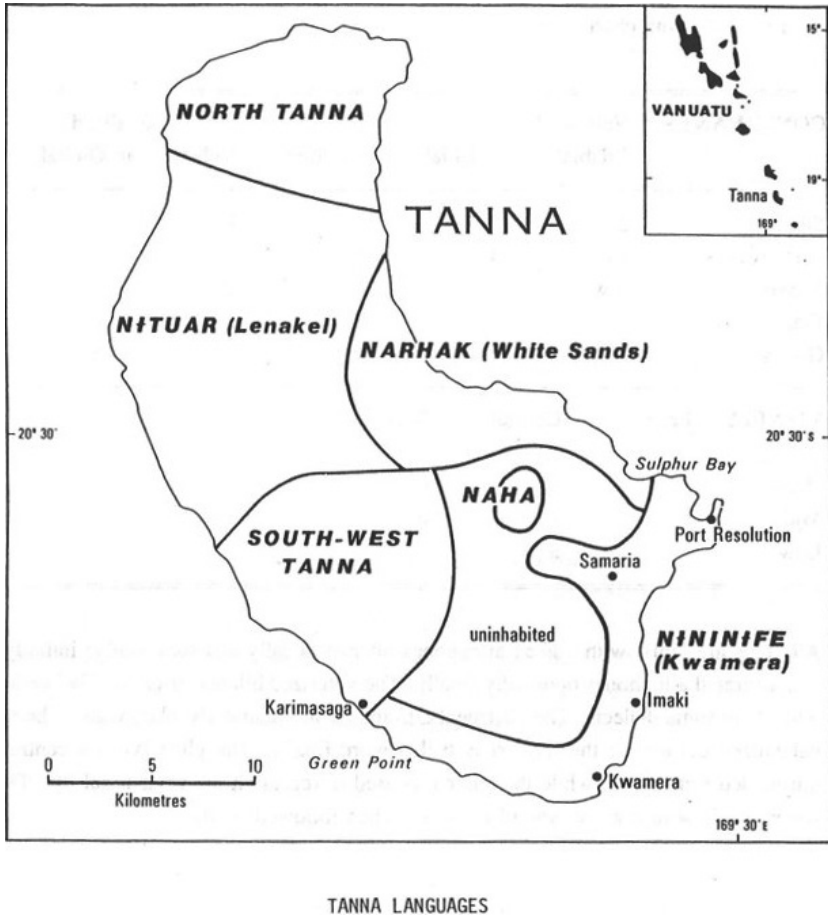


FIGURE 2. Tanna Languages.

Nafe (Nife or sometimes Nininife) language, with minor lexical differences, extends along the southeastern coast from the Port Resolution area down to Kwamera, and beyond to Green Point in the southwest (Lindstrom 1986; Lindstrom and Lynch 1994) (Fig. 2). The Watts used Nafe at both mission sites, although Presbyterians named the language Kwamera after Watt's first station. Watt translated, as soon as linguistic skills permitted, Kwamera versions of the Gospels, along with some Christian pedagogical material (Miller 1986, 270). The Eglinton Street branch of the Glasgow Foundry Boys Religious Society, a predecessor to the Boys Brigade that was founded in 1865 to support and uplift

boys working in Glasgow's iron foundries, adopted Watt's mission as a charity, and in 1873 the boys shipped a hand printing press to Tanna (Flexner 2016, 98). Watt used this in 1875 to print small books about Jesus's parables and miracles. In 1878, he more ambitiously printed the Gospel of Mathew, then the Acts of the Apostles (1881), Genesis (1883), and the first 19 chapters of Exodus (1884) in runs of 200 copies (Murray 1888, 150).

By the late 1880s, the Watts had persisted for two decades on Tanna and they had learned Nafe. Watt, in 1894, sent linguist Sidney Ray a Kwamera grammar that Ray relied on in his comparative study of Melanesian languages (1926). Mission colleagues particularly appreciated Agnes's linguistic expertise. Agnes herself bragged that she was a better linguist than was William, having picked up Nafe more quickly from local women (Watt 1896: 188, 218). She "possessed a wonderfully accurate knowledge of native customs and language" (1896, 42). Agnes (Watt 1890) translated stories of Biblical personages, and these were published in Scotland along with the New Testament (*Nakukua i ramavisau nakur kameni iraha ya Baibel*, "Book that explains people one mentions in the Bible"). She also translated numerous English hymns into Nafe, mostly based on Presbyterian standards (Watt 1896: 41–43, 287). These still feature in Tanna's hymnals (e.g., *Naresien em nupume ia nafkwakien ia nagkierien Kwamera*).

When Watt tackled translating the entire New Testament, alongside Agnes, he relied on local "pundits" for assistance. Agnes identified Naswai as one of Watt's "final pundits" (1896, 323; cf. Inglis 1887: 103–105). Naswai lived near Kwamera, as did most of his fellow pundits, prompting southern Nafe variants of several important words, including nakirien ("word") instead of nagkierien, the Port Resolution form, and -atoni ("see") rather than -ata, in the Kwamera New Testament. Watt drew on previous Bible translations that Thomas Neilson had prepared before he left the island in 1882, including Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, Hebrews, Timothy, and Revelation. Neilson perhaps chose to translate Revelation expecting that grim news of doomsday might advance his conversion efforts.

I have been unable to locate Watt's diary that might indicate when he tackled Revelation. Like Neilson, he may have begun translation in the 1870s after polishing his technique on the Gospels, or he may have worked through the New Testament sequentially, only preparing Revelation in the late 1880s before he brought the completed manuscript to Scotland. We do not know the extent to which Watt based his final translation of Revelation on Neilson's earlier work. Watt noted, however, that Neilson's were "first translations, and will require much revision before they will be ready for the press" (Murray 1888, 151). Watt finalized a New Testament draft by 1889, Agnes writing that August: "revision of the New Testament is complete" (1896, 318).

The National Bible Society of Scotland, “with the consent of the British and Foreign Bible Society” (Murray 1888, 150), used a legacy it had received to fund the publication of Watt’s New Testament translation (Watt 1896: 30–31) (Fig. 3). The Bible Societies required translators to use the Authorized English (King James) version of the New Testament (Gardner 2006: 300–301), which Watt clearly did. To arrange publication of the Kwamera New Testament, the Watts returned to Scotland in late 1889 where “for months life seemed to consist in revising and correcting proofs” (Watt 1896, 31). Despite strenuous proofing, several glitches crept into Revelation. The translation combines verses 14:2 and 14:3, with 14:3 omitted. Opening words of verse 22:2 (*ya kurukwai swatuk iken*, “in the midst of the street”) are included at the end of verse 22:1. The first phrase of verse 13:1 has moved to end Watt’s preceding verse 12:17 (in rarer *ya ruki nepaker*, “And I stood upon the sand of the sea”). Watt’s translation here reads “he stands on the beach.” Verse 7:9 begins “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude . . .” Watt’s translation instead substitutes *hoihi* (“3PPL-small little”) for what probably should have been *asori* (“big/many”):

*Kenapiraka narimnarime ine iau yak-atipen, mata nermama hoihi anan . . .*

“After these things I looked out, and saw a very few/little people . . .”

Verse 5:14 leaves out the concluding phrase “that liveth for ever and ever.” Watt also omitted “dogs” from 22:15 (“For without are dogs, and sorcerers . . .”), perhaps because he concluded *Nafe kuri* (“dog”) isn’t scurrilous enough. Apart from these few slips, Watt’s translation sticks faithfully to the original King James text.

The Bible Society’s grant paid for publication and permitted the Watts, when back on Tanna in 1891, to distribute copies freely. Agnes claimed that most recipients showed “joy at getting them” and “ever since have plodded diligently to be able to read them,” apart from some suspicious youth who refused to accept a book from abroad, fearing that it might make them sick (1896, 323). Earlier, on Aneityum, the mission had required converts to pay for both Bible translation and publication with donations of arrowroot (Murray 1886, 151). Aneityumese converts’ production for export of arrowroot, a missionary introduced cash crop, provided the Bible Society £1200, which it used to support publication of the translated Bible, and also to provide stipends to missionary translators John Inglis and John Geddie, and lesser stipends to their wives. The mission then charged again, when it sold copies of the book to Aneityumese Christians (Inglis 1887: 110–111). On Tanna, aware that Christian publications often caused suspicion, the Watts decided not to charge for *Nagkirian Ruvani Sumun Savi*, although

NAGKIRIEN RUVANI SUMUN SAVI

SAVRI

YERU ANU SAKETAHA

KETIR RAMAVAHU UMURU KETAHA.

athya

ak

ak

Jon

Narimnari AHI NAGKIRIEN KRIS, KARAIPEN YA NAGKIRIEN

KAMANI KWAMARA, TANA IPARE, NYU HEBRIDES.

ku

Glasgow :

PRINTED FOR THE NATIONAL BIBLE SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND BY  
R. E. ROBERTSON, LTD., 198 BUCHANAN STREET.

1923.

FIGURE 3. The New Testament in Kwamera.



they did establish a chapter of the Bible Society and convened meetings where they collected cash donations that they remitted to London, alongside other gifts of cash sent to the Glasgow Foundry Boys (Watt 1896: 266, 306). R. E. Robertson of Glasgow reprinted the Nafe New Testament in 1923.

### **Revelation**

Revelation, or Apocalypse, along with Genesis, bookends the Christian Bible. The book offers a number of enduring puzzles. It may or may not have been written by John on the island of Patmos. John may or may not have been an Anatolian Jew and convert to Christianity. And he may or may not have been exiled to Patmos, having somehow come to the attention of Roman authority. Revelation, some scholars believe, has an underlying structure of seven parts. John first asserts that his revealed knowledge came from Jesus. While “in the spirit” he heard behind him “a great voice, as of a trumpet” (1:10); but also that an angel “sent and signified” his revelations (1:1). Next come messages to seven Anatolian Christian churches. Then a scroll with seven seals which, when opened, release horsemen, earthquakes, angels, and seven trumpets which devastate the earth. Several spiritual figures, good and bad, then appear: a woman with a male child, a dragon, a beast with seven heads, another beast with lamb-like horns, and a lamb on Mt. Zion surrounded by 144,000 redeemed believers. Then angels pour seven bowls on land and sea, which eradicate much of creation. A great whore on a scarlet beast makes trouble. A final judgment casts one beast and a false prophet into a lake of fire, the dragon imprisoned for 1,000 years in a bottomless pit. Christ and resurrected martyrs rule on earth during those 1,000 years until the dragon emerges, deceives and gathers followers for a final battle, and is defeated. A last judgment finishes off troublemakers, who also are cast into the lake of fire, this their second death. Finally, a new heaven and new earth, with a new Jerusalem, replace the old, ravaged world, and surviving believers no longer suffer or die.

Revelation’s allusions and obscurities, and John’s quirky Greek, have presented significant difficulties of translation since the book squeezed into the canon in the fourth century. The Prophet favored figures and numbers (seven cities, seals, candlesticks, trumpets, plagues, mountains, heads; twelve foundations, gates, angels; 666; 144,000), strange beasts, a dragon, and a whore, jewels and gems, fiery pits and golden cities. Martin Luther, when translating the New Testament into German, was a critic, although later warmed to the book when Protestants found it useful to equate Rome with Babylon, and the Pope with the beast. John Calvin wrote commentary on every Bible book except Revelation, but his Scottish follower John Knox also liked to imagine the Bishop of Rome



TABLE 1. Watt's Orthography.

Nafe phone	Watt's Orthography
[i, ə]	a, e, u, i
[m, n]	ᵐm, ᵐn
[r]	ᵐr
[ŋ]	g

as the Anti-Christ. Most Scottish Presbyterians thus embraced Revelation as valued prophecy (Drinnon 2013).

### Translation

Watt's Revelation translation remains readable even given his orthographic choices. He stretched his hand press's five vowel types to cover Nafe's sixth mid-central vowel. He denoted devoiced nasals [m] and [n] and liquid [r] with a preceding backquote mark. He used [g] for the velar nasal (Table 1).

Readers should have also followed Watt's treatment of some adjunct morphemes as postclitics (tagged onto a verb root) rather than as separate words, as in verse 1:18:

raka (completion), yakuva'maraka, yak-uva'ma-raka  
("1PS-die-completion")

eme [me, PL4+], nukeme, nuk-eme ("yam.year-PL4+")

umi [mwi, "again"], yakumuruumi, yak-umuru-umi (1PS-live-again)

Watt also juggled hyphenation, often inserting a hyphen between the verb root and the second component of the nominalizing circumfix (n. . ien) morpheme (-ien), as in Revelation 2:9 *namisa-ien* (n-amisa-ien, -amisa "ache, hurt"); and between some (but not all) tense and person markers and verb roots, as in 2:8 *tik-apa* (t-ik-apa, "FUT-2PS-apa," -apa NEG). Despite these complications, readers (and hearers) can parse out at least the surface meaning of Revelation's message.

Watt clearly worked to produce a locally coherent Nafe reading rather than a literal translation of sacred text, antedating sophisticated twentieth century Bible translation theory (e.g., Nida and Taber 1974; Buber and Rosenzweig 1994). He translated the book's title as *Nari Kenamsasani John Remarai* ("Things one started to show John writes"). Here is opening verse 1:1 as an example (ES is an echo subject marker):

Watt: Nari kenamsasani savei Yesu Kresto,  
 Thing 3PS(one)-INCHOATIVE-reveal POSS Jesus Christ,

KJV: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Atua ravahipen min menwa  
 God 3PS-gave-DIRaway ES-3ps ES-PERF-say  
 which God gave unto him,

in te-ravisau em kankwanfagame  
 he FUT-3PS-advise to 3PSPOSS-crewman-PL  
 to shew unto his servants

narimnarime teini no tu-uvehe;  
 thing-CONJ-thing-PL those PERF-do FUT-3PS-come  
 things which must shortly come to pass;

in ra'ripen agelo savani menwa in  
 he 3PS-send-DIRaway angel his ES-PERF-say he  
 and he sent and signified it

te-ravisau em kankwanfaga Jon;  
 FUT-3PS-advise to 3PSPOSS-crewman John;  
 by his angel unto his servant John.”

### *Watt's Nafe Grammar*

Spoken Nafe today has not much diverged from Watt's nineteenth century literary translation. Watt had grasped the language's essential grammatical features, as Revelation reveals.

1. Verbal morphemes: Watt's verbs feature appropriate person/number morphemes along with tense/aspect markers.
  - a. These include the continuant -(a)m-: pa nabien r-am-ara (1:4), “let pity/love 3PS-CONT-exist”;
  - b. Both perfective allomorphs -(e)n- and -v-: kuvani (22:6), “3PS-PERF-say”; yakenaregi (22:8), “1PS-PERF-hear”;
  - c. The conditional -p-: ipapa (2:5), “2PS-COND-not\_do” (as in ik ipapa nararegien ya reram, “except thou repent”);
  - d. The inchoative -enam-: kenamsasani (1:1), “3PS-INCHO-show,” Watt's translation for “Revelation” itself: “one began to show/reveal”;

- e. The sequential -pk-: ik ipuk-ata nari (3:18), “you 2PS-SEQ-see thing,” for “that thou mayest see.”
2. Person morphemes: Nafe, like many Vanuatu languages, features 15 person morphemes: first inclusive, first exclusive, second, and third in the singular, dual, trial, and plural as independent morphemes and verbal prefixes, along with an impersonal verbal prefix k- (see Lynch 2001, 124). Watt juggled all these correctly. Missionary translation elsewhere occasionally went awry with first person inclusive/exclusive. If one addresses God with the inclusive “we are sinners” one thus implies that God is too (Gardner 2006, 310). The Christian triune God also complicated translation. How far should translations lean on Austronesian trial person markers? Inglis, on Aneityum, was happy to do so, where Genesis 1:26 became “Let *us three* make man in the image of *us three*” (1887, 99). Watt avoided one potential pitfall in 5:10, changing source “and we shall reign of the earth” to iraha tu-amerumanu ya tuprana (“they will be ruling on earth”), and correctly addressed Atua sakemaha “our-exclusive God” in 7:3.
  3. Echo-subjects: As Lynch (1983) has described, echo-subject prefixes replace same-subject person prefixes on subsequent verbs. A singular echoed subject takes m- as in sin reseka marer ya nanimen? (6:17), “who 3PS-strong ES-stand at face.eyes-3PSPOSS?” (“who shall be able to stand?”) Watt also used the trial person echo-subject -mhar- although orthographically he did not note the devoiced plural -mh- or the dual -(m)rou-: maraven, marata nerumanume ya pam tuprena, marasusasumun iraha (16:14), “ES3P-go ES3P-see people-PL from all lands, ES3P-gather them,” for “they three [unclean spirits] . . . which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them. . . .”
  4. Negation: Nafe negates verbs in two main ways: The first with a verbal suffix -mha along with prefix -pk-, and the second with the negative verb apwah followed by a nominalized form of the verb being negated (Lindstrom and Lynch 1994, 28). Watt used both these constructions: puk-ata ma ik (3:17), “NEG-see-NEG you”; ik enapa nokeikeien Kresto kupan seim (2:4), “you PERF-NEG NOM-love-NOM Christ your,” or “thou hast left thy first love.”
  5. Directionals: Nafe possesses several directional suffixes, including -pehe (“towards speaker or hearer”), -pen (“away from speaker or hearer”), and -uta (“upwards”) (Lindstrom and Lynch 1994, 13; Lynch 2001: 159–160). Watt incorporated these in his Nafe verbs: ravahipen (1:1), “3PS-give-AWAY”; iau tapuk-avei-pehe kraun (2:10), “I FUT-SEQ-give-TOWARDS crown”; rausauta regen matuk (10:5), “3PS-effect-UPWARDS arm-3PS-POSS right,” or “lifted up his hand.”

6. Number morphemes: Watt also figured out Nafe’s number markers *mi* (dual), *mirahar* (trial), and *me* (plural): *yemami* (11:3), “men-DUAL”; *irahar nari mirahar* (9:18), “they-three thing of-TRIAL,” or “By these three”; *nagkirien parhieneme savai Atua* (19:9), “words truth-PL of God” as in “true sayings of God”).

And Watt drew on Nafe’s rich system of possession morphemes, including *sanmwu-* (“drinkable possession”): *ik enavahipenumi neta sanumunraha miraha* (16:6), “you PERF-give-AWAY-also blood POSS.DRINKABLE-3PPL to-3PPL,” or “thou hast given them blood to drink.”

### Watt’s Lexical Translations

Watts relied on an effective grammatical system, but he still had to deal with Revelation’s words and concepts. Lexically, with the help of Agnes and local pundits, he sometimes found suitable Nafe synonyms for English terms; sometimes invented Nafe paraphrases for Christian concepts, or drew on pedagogical neologisms dating back to the establishment of the mission; and sometimes resorted to English or early Bislama loanwords (Gardner 2006: 306–307; Inglis 1887, 97). Most of Watt’s Nafe paraphrases replace English nouns or adjectives. Subsequent studies of code-mixing in oral discourse also have noted that noun mixes are most frequent, followed by adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and then miscellaneous grammatical items (Sridhar and Sridhar 1980, 409). Nafe’s inventory of verbs (and also pronouns, occasional adverbs, and prepositions) mostly afforded satisfactory synonyms for direct translation, although mission schooling had already stretched the meaning of some terms: *-rai* (“mark” had come also to mean “write”), and *-uvsini* (“count” also “read”). Watt, for Revelation, found it necessary to invent Nafe paraphrases for just a few key Christian verbs, including “repent,” “redeem,” “prophesize,” and “judge” (Table 2, noting verse of first appearance).

Notably, missionary choices to rename their supernaturals could cause confusion, not to mention theological error. By 1890, standardized Nafe terms had emerged: *Atua* (“God,” which dated back to John William’s Samoan teachers at

TABLE 2. Christian verbs and Nafe paraphrases.

Christian verb	Nafe paraphrase
repent (2:16)	<i>arareg ya reram</i> (“return to your innards/heart”)
redeem (5:9)	<i>arai em atua</i> (“write/mark to god”)
prophesy (10:11)	<i>esematuk mavisau nagkirien</i> (“straighten and advise talk”)
judge (16:6)	<i>aruku atukwatuk</i> (“correctly reciprocate”)

**TABLE 3. Watt's Biblical Paraphrases and Synonyms.**

Biblical lexeme	Nafe paraphrase or synonym
revelation (1:1)	nari kenamsasani ("thing one has begun to reveal")
servant (1:1)	kwanfaga ("crewman, helper")
witness (n) (1:5)	ketir ramavisau ("person advises")
sin (1:5)	tafaga reraha ("bad behavior")
priests (1:6)	nema samamre nari ya nefata em atua ("men who put things on the bed/platform of atua")
almighty (1:8)	esekai-abba ("unusually strong")
kingdom (1:9)	entata ("canoe, social group")
patience (1:9)	natareg-meruien te nari ("thinking slowly about things")
hell (1:18, 20:13)	imei nakur huva'ma hamara ("place where dead people live"); imei ne'meijen ("place of sickness/death")
mystery (1:20)	nari kamerkwafa ("thing one is hiding")
rich (adj.) (2:9)	amameri nari ("putting thing(s)")
riches (n.) (5:2)	nubasien ("possessions")
poverty (2:9)	niwanien ya nari ("absence of thing(s)")
blasphemy (2:9)	nagkieren reraha se rupinari ("biggest bad talk")
fornication (2:14)	nepirinari ("piece of a thing, any trouble or bad behavior")
charity (2:19)	nokeikeijen kresto ("christ(like) love")
tribulation (2:22)	namisaien usabba ("extraordinary pain")
holy (3:7, 11:2)	amasan ("good"); ikinan ("tabu")
worship (3:9)	arpasuk ("bend down")
heaven (4:1)	neai ("sky")
beast (4:6, 6:8)	nari umuru ("live thing"); nari apirumun ("bush thing")
honor (n.) (4:11, 7:12)	navahiuta-ien ("lifting up"); nesiaien ("respect, fear, obedience")
seal (5:1)	nari kamasisag i ("thing one closes with")
tribe (5:5)	numipi ("grandchildren of")
blessing (5:12)	nakwein-amasanien ("call goodness")

pale horse (6:8)	hors akweas (“yellow horse”)
bondsmen (6:15)	nakur kam’ri iraha (“people one has placed”)
freemen (6:15)	nakur kapuka’ri’ma iraha (“people one hasn’t placed”)
salvation (7:10)	navahi-umuruien (“giving life”)
torment (v.) (9:5)	o meta (“make trouble”)
army (9:16)	nemafiame (“fierce men”)
devil (9:20, 16:14)	ere’ma (“ancestral spirit”); agelo eraha (“bad angel”)
prophesy (n.) (22:18)	nagkieren kamenipui narimnarime ira (“talk one revealed things with”)
gentiles (11:2)	nakur ya taname (“people of the lands”)
plagues (11:6)	neraha-ieneme pam (“all badness”)
enemies (11:12)	nermepa me (“other people”)
saints 11(18)	nakur amasan (“good people”)
virgins 14(4)	nakur amasan (“good people”)
faith in Jesus (14:12)	ahatata ya Yesu (“lean on Jesus”)
whore (17:1)	pran ramo asori nepirinari (“woman who does big bad things”)
martyrs (17:6)	nakur kenausiapone (“people one kills dead”)
marvel (v.) (17:6)	asak asori tukwe (“cry loudly from”)
merchants (18:3)	nakur hameriari (“people who distribute”)
queen (18:7)	abreinap (“unmarried woman, a boy’s initial sex partner”)
slaves (18:13)	nuprai nermamame (“bodies of people”)
marriage (supper) (19:9)	narerien (“standing”)
faithful (n.) (19:11)	ketir tuk-ategitei ira (“one who will rely on it”)
souls (20:4)	nanumi nermama (“spirits of people”)
resurrection (20:5)	natuienumi (“waking again”)
curse (n.) (22:3)	nari kamauraha yermama ira (“thing one spoils people with”)
reward (n.) (22:12)	nari tuk-araku nermama ira (“thing one will pay people with”)

Port Resolution in 1839), Yesu Kristo (“Jesus Christ”), Nanumun Amasan (“the Holy Spirit,” “good spirit”), Yerumanu (“the Lord,” “leader, chief”), diabololo (“the Devil”), Setan (“Satan”), agelo (“angel”), and nakalasia (“the church”). Watt created paraphrases for “hell” (imei nakur huva‘ma hamara, “place where dead people live,” or imei ne‘meien, “place of sickness/death”) instead of using Ipwai, the Nafe word for “land of spirits.” He did use Nafe neai (“sky”) for “heaven,” and he translated “devils” (9:20) and “idols” (2:14) with nare‘mame [iaremha, “dead man, ancestral spirit”], as had Nisbett, Turner, and Paton, his predecessors at Port Resolution (Adams 1984: 61–64, 112–113; Lindstrom 2007, 219). Ancestral ghosts are the principal impinging spirit figures on the island. The Watts, Paton, and other missionaries condemned traditional post-kava prayers to the neremha, first fruit offerings, and other ancestral supplications, and they aimed to substitute God and Jesus in their place. As Ron Adams has noted, these lexical proxies “would have strengthened the natural tendency on the part of the Tannese to evaluate Christianity in terms of their customary magico-religious framework” (1984, 62).

Watt’s synonym choices and paraphrases of core Christian concepts may have been similarly perplexing, at least initially, although he built on twenty years of Christian teaching on the island (Table 3, noting verse of first appearance).

Many of these Nafe paraphrases come close to a word’s English connotation, and readers/hearers should have understood them, although they may not have followed the text’s larger meanings. Watt also devised Nafe paraphrases for unfamiliar objects, a few mathematical categories, and one cardinal direction (Table 4). To address perplexity, Watt and his teachers presumably would have explained muddled concepts during weekly church services, and in the dozen or so schools the Watts established across the southeast region, where scholars learned to read using mostly Christian material.

Watt sometimes stretched a Nafe term to evoke an English source: a “great furnace” (9:2) is yasur (“volcano”); “brimstone” (9:17) is nerkwias (“volcanic clay; sulfurous fumerole”); “hour” (14:7) is kwopi napen (“piece of day”), and “gave her space” (2:21) is avahipen nepen min (“gave day/time to her”). He also chose among various Nafe terms for “carry” that hinge on where and how something is carried, choosing avrani (“carry on one’s shoulder”) to translate “I will put upon you none other burden” (2:24). Watt’s paraphrase for “plagues” (15:1, neraha-ieneme, “badnesses”) is also notable given mission reluctance to accept blame for causing a series of massive epidemics on the island.

Watt’s use of abreinap for “Queen” (18:7) is certainly peculiar. Preinhap (also pran vi) can mean “unmarried woman,” but is also the term for a woman once brought to a traditional men’s house on a village’s kava clearing who was sexually available (to unmarried men, men today claim) and who served as a youth’s initial sexual partner. Missionaries much deplored the practice (see Watt 1896, 350). Humphreys, a visiting anthropologist and guest of Thomas Macmillan, the Presbyterian missionary



**TABLE 4. Paraphrases of Foreign Objects/Concepts.**

Foreign term	Nafe translation
trumpet (1:10)	kisup (“triton shell”)
sword (1:16)	nauitoga (“foreign knife”)
prison (2:10)	nimwa akneken (“strong house”)
pillar (3:12)	besagi ya nimwa (“house’s nose”)
eyesalve (3:18)	nari kamahakwi namri yerama ira (“thing one washes people’s eyes with”)
balance (n.) (6:5)	nari kamo nemtation ira (“thing one makes a mark with”)
sackcloth (6:12)	tenari ya nu’mri nari (“cloth for putting things”)
east (7:2)	kwopeni meri ra-uta iken (“place where the sun rises”)
censer (8:3)	narime nepekenien ramasan rebuk (“things the smell is really good”)
third part (of the earth) (8:7)	kwopeni reti ya tuprana kapa kwopenemi karu (“one place of the earth not including two places”)
wormwood (8:11)	nari afia (“bitter thing”)
great furnace (9:2)	yasur (“volcano”)
three days and a half (11:9)	napen kahar, mene ya nekar napen se ro kefa (“three days, and half of the fourth day”)
hail (11:19)	nesan se rarupu asori (“rain that dances/boils a lot”)
lamb (13:11)	puti ship (“small sheep”)
winepress (14:19)	nari kamvyiaterini vain ira (“thing one presses wine with”)
double (v.) (18:6)	arupun em karu min (“repay twice to it”)
oil (18:13)	nese olev (“juice of olive”)
millstone (18:22)	kampir kamarari flaur ira (“stone one grinds flour with”)
pipers (18:22)	nakur hauwaswasi kwanau (“people they blow panpipes”)
bridegroom (18:23)	ketir repuk-amera te kansuaru (“person who is to marry with his spouse”)

at White Sands, labeled these women “prostitutes” (1926, 115). Watt might have instead used *abreina* to translate “whore” (17:1), but here he relied on a paraphrase (*bran afwe ramo asori nepirinari*, “the woman who does big bad things”), perhaps rightly concerned with creating cross-cultural confusion.

“Work,” a key concept that missionaries hoped to inculcate in the converted but one that had no direct Nafe equivalent, also presented a problem. Watt sometimes merely borrowed English “work” (2:26, 3:2), sometimes used Nafe *tafaga* (2:23) (“behavior”), sometimes an invented paraphrase *narinamrime ik amo* (2:2) (“things you do”), and he once omitted the word from the verse (2:9). Island time concepts more closely paralleled the early Christian. Time, if not static, is more cyclical than linear (Lindstrom 2011a). Watt had no problem bending Nafe to convey John’s temporal warnings of a perpetual beast, *nari apirumun afwe* (“bush thing there” (17:8)), although how people took this is questionable. Feral pigs are the island’s only wild beasts, though it might have been an easy jump to an omnipresent, dangerous, and savage spirit.

TABLE 5. **Biblical and Mission Loans.**

Biblical and Mission Loans
agelo (“angel”)
Atua (“god,” Samoan)
Kresto (“Christ”)
nakalasia (“church,” ecclesia, Greek)
apostelo (“apostle”)
profeta (“prophet”)
Setan (“satan”)
Elder (“elder”)
Diabolo (“devil”)
Yesu (“Jesus”)
haleluya (“halleluiah”)
Alfa, Omeka (“Alpha,” “Omega”)
paradais (“paradise”)
Isreel (“Israel”)
Jerusalem (“Jerusalem”)
Babelon (“Babylon”)
Kok, Mekok (“Gog,” “Magog”)
mana (“manna”)
Hibru (“Hebrew”)
Kris (“Greece”)
frankensens (“frankincense”)

Watt:      in renamara                      tui,                      mamiwan                      ipetmene,  
                  He 3PS-INCHOATIVE-live ago      ES-CONT-none      today-and  
                  “the beast that was, and is not

                 mata    te-r-upuk-ara-mi  
                  but    FUT-3PS-SEQ-live-again  
                  and yet is” KJV (17:8).

Watt also found Nafe wordings for “which was, and is, and is to come” (4:8), and “which art, and wast, and shalt be” (16:5).

### Borrowings and Transliterations

Alongside finding Nafe synonyms and creating Nafe paraphrases for English terms, Watt also sometimes just transliterated lexemes from Biblical English or, in a few cases, early Bislama. As with his Nafe paraphrases, Watt mainly borrowed nouns (Table 5). He maintained, although transliterated, Revelation's place names (e.g., Esyia (Asia), Efesas, Feladelfia, Esreel, Kris), and also Hibru, Yufretes, and of course Alfa and Omeka. He code-mixed a range of other Biblical terms into the translation, either because he decided that no Nafe synonym existed or, if there was a Nafe word with similar meaning, this would distort people's comprehension of source meaning.

Watt likewise resorted to English loanwords, instead of seeking Nafe synonyms or even paraphrasing, for various items unknown on the island. These include terms for old world animals, real and imaginary (Table 6); various alien concepts (Table 7); and Revelation's miscellaneous fancy goods that adorn heaven and the New Jerusalem

TABLE 6. **Animals.**

Animals
laion ("lion")
lepard ("leopard")
ikel ("eagle")
frok ("frog")
drakon ("dragon")
lam ("lamb")
skorpion ("scorpion")
ber ("bear")
hors ("horse")
sip ("sheep")

TABLE 7. **Objects, Concepts.**

Objects, Concepts
thron ("throne")
lamp ("lamp")
harp ("harp")
flaur ("flour")
whit ("wheat")
barle ("barley")
olev ("olive")
pam ("palm")
sno ("snow")
selk ("silk")
kraun ("crown")
hone ("honey")
wain ("wine")
vain ("vine")
braidel ("bridel")
jariot ("chariot")
work ("work")
mone ("money")
ki ("key")
peper ("scroll")
thank yu ("thank you")
aur ("hour"); nekare aur ("half an hour")

(Table 8). His inconsistent hors was sometimes “horse.” He borrowed *ikel* (“eagle”) instead of the familiar Nafe *kweria* (“swamp harrier, hawk”), and likewise *pam* (“palm”) instead of a Nafe word for the various palm species on the island. He also missed an obscure Nafe term for “scorpion,” *iamnikeiap*. Thank *yu* (4:9, 7:12, 11:17) confirms missionary wife Mary Matheson’s 1860 complaint (she preceded the Watts at Kwamera) that her island neighbors “do not seem to have any word for compassion, and there seems to be no such emotion within them. There is no word expressive of gratitude” (Patterson 1864, 466). (Recently Nafe *tanak* has emerged as a “thank you” *calque*.)

Watt relied on English loans for directions, measures of distance and weight (Table 9), as well as for many numbers (Table 10).

Although Watt had paraphrased “east” in 7:2 as “place where the sun rises,” in 21:3 he borrowed English terms for the four cardinal directions. He also borrowed *kubet* (“cubit”) but converted Revelation’s “a thousand and six hundred furlongs” (14:20) to *mail tu handred* (“two hundred miles”), and “talent” (16:21) to *won handred paundeme* (“100 hundred pounds”). Watt dealt variously with the Prophet’s fondness for numbers. He mixed, without apparent design, both Nafe and English terms. Island scholars had learned roman numerals in mission schools since the 1840s, and Watt followed his source text in numbering Revelation’s chapters (*kwopi nagkirien asori*, “piece of important words”) and verses. Within the text, he alternated between English loans

TABLE 8. **Fancy Goods.**

Gems, Metals, Flowers
<i>kold</i> (“gold”)
<i>selper</i> (“silver”)
<i>aivore</i> (“ivory”)
<i>marbel</i> (“marble”)
<i>bras</i> (“brass”)
<i>airon</i> (“iron”)
<i>jasper</i> (“jasper”)
<i>sardias</i> (“sardine”)
<i>sardeas</i> (“sardius”)
<i>kresolait</i> (“chrysolite”)
<i>berl</i> (“beryl”)
<i>topas</i> (“topaz”)
<i>kraisoprasas</i> (“chrysoprasus”)
<i>jasenth</i> (“jacinth”)
<i>amethest</i> (“amethyst”)
<i>emerald</i> (“emerald”)
<i>safair</i> (“safir”)
<i>kalsedone</i> (“chalcedony”)
<i>sardoneks</i> (“sardonyx”)
<i>perl</i> (“pearl”)
<i>klas</i> (“glass”)
<i>krestel</i> (“crystal”)
<i>haiasenth</i> (“hyacinth”)

TABLE 9. **Directions, Distance, Weights.**

Directions, Distance, Weights
ist (“east”)
north (“north”)
sauth (“south”)
west (“west”)
mail (“mile”) (“furlong”)
won handred paundeme (“talent”)
kubet (“cubit”)

TABLE 10. **Numbers.**

Numbers
numera (“number”)
won (“1”)
for (“4”)
faiv (“5”)
seks (“6”)
seven (“7”)
nain (“9”)
ten (“10”)
twelv (“12”)
twente for (“24”)
forte tu (“42”)
tu handred (“200”)
seks handred me sekste seks (“666”)
won thousand, thausand (“1000”)
feftin handred (“1500”)
twelv handred em sekste (“1260”)
seven thousand (“7000”)
won handred em forte for thausand (“144,000”)
tu handred melyan (“200,000,000”)

TABLE 11. **Bislama Loans.**

Early Bislama?
kurimatau (“calf”)
lamp (“lamp”)
mone (“penny”)
kapten (“captain”)
selor (“sailor”)

and Nafe terms. Nafe, as is typical of southern Vanuatu languages, has a quinary base-5 system which Watt often employed (21:20). But he also borrowed from English. “Twelve” is twelv in 21:21 but kariram kariram karu (“five five two, or 12”) in the verse (21:20), just preceding. He resorted to English for numbers greater than 12, although incorporated Nafe me or em (“and”) to construct several of these, e.g., 13:18’s seks handred me sekste seks (666).

Many on Tanna would have understood rudimentary Bislama when Watt began his translation efforts in the 1870s, having encountered the Pidgin in Christian school, on ships or local plantations, or when traveling abroad (Crowley 1990: 97–98). Since the 1860s, Tannese men and some women had worked on island plantations or signed up to work in Queensland, Fiji, New Caledonia, and Samoa. Bislama, however, is little apparent in Watt’s Revelation, although some English loanwords are also Bislama terms, e.g., hors(e) and ship (“sheep”) (Table 11). Only one word, kurimatau (4:7 “calf,” and then 18:13 “beasts”), obviously derives

from Bislama—this is the Tanna and Aneityum version of old Bislama *bulamakao*, “cattle” (Camden 1977, 15), *kuri* the Nafe word for “dog.” Also, *lamp* (from hurricane lamp), which Watt used to translate “candle” (18:23, 22:5) and “candlestick” (1:12–13, 1:20, 2:1, 2:5, 11:4), may have come from nineteenth century Bislama, as might *mone* (6:6, *kwopi mone reti*, “piece of money” or “penny”) and nautical terms *kapten* (6:15) and *selor* (18:17).

In oral discourse today, Nafe possesses a nativization device that readily incorporates single Bislama words and phrases alike. Almost any Bislama verb, adjective, or noun can be grafted into a Nafe sentence simply by introducing the word with *-o* (“do, make”) with appropriate person, number, and aspect prefixes. Examples recorded in the 1980s (Lindstrom 2007: 223–224) include *iako agens* (“I am against”), *o ro aksen riti* (“[you should] make some action”), *in ro ting* (“he thinks”), and *iko trabol* (“you make trouble”), among many others. Within Nafe, *-o + verb* is a common structure, with the secondary verb taking echo-subject prefixes. One finds several examples of *-o* in Watt’s translation, e.g., *tu-o meta iraha* (9:5, “one will torment them,” *-o meta* “cause trouble/blood”), and also *-o* in Nafe ordinals (*Agela se ro kariram*, “the fifth angel”), but he did not use *-o + loan* to insert English/Bislama borrowings. The 2013 Kwamera New Testament, translated by SIL volunteer Erik Stapleton and his own crew of pundits, includes various examples of *-o + Bislama loan*, as in 19:18, *ko slef ia niraha* (“one makes slaves of them”) (Wycliffe Bible Translators 2013, 638). In 1890, Watt may have avoided mixing available Bislama forms aiming at scriptural formality or because nativization devices such as *-o + loan* had not yet developed.

### John of Patmos, John Frum of Tanna

John’s Apocalypse certainly has “inspired artists and rebels alike” for nearly 2000 years in its urgent articulation that “the world is facing a catastrophe” and its “convincing picture of the glorious future that awaits mankind after the last, decisive conflict” (Quispel 1979, 3), and we can suppose that, despite its baffling translated allegories, it made waves on Tanna, too. The Bible offered powerful knowledge, and likely was the only book around. As Pacific religions scholar Forman concluded, “in those areas where a full translation of the scriptures had long been available, biblical knowledge was phenomenal. Every tortuous detail and obscure point in the entire book seemed to be common knowledge” (1982, 94). Islanders, Forman noted, always localized Christian narratives, and leaders of new religious movements also appropriated Bible stories. Noah built his ark, many claim, on Iankahi ridge just east of Port Resolution.

Fifty years after Watt returned to Tanna with the published Nafe New Testament, the island was in the midst of an active social movement. On 11 May

1941, followers of the shadowy John Frum abruptly quit the mission, leaving churches nearly empty (Lindstrom 1993). In late 1940, Tanna's British District Agent sent news to his superiors in Port Vila of suspicious nocturnal affairs near Green Point. People had gathered there for the previous year or so to listen to a mysterious figure, apparently human but with spiritual powers, who called himself John Frum and spoke Nafe. John encouraged people to return to their proper family lands and to island customs including kava drinking and dancing, to discard their dollars and francs as he would provide a new money along with the sort of cargo and supplies islanders had enjoyed during the American occupation of the archipelago during the Pacific War (Guiart 1956). John prophesized various world reversals, including disappearing mountains, rising seas, and the departure of meddling Europeans (Fig. 4).

There are notable parallels between the prophesies and subsequent outcomes of John of Patmos and John Frum of Tanna, although it is difficult to ascertain Revelation's exact effects on the island's ongoing political agitation. Agnes, as noted, reported that people received the Nafe New Testament in 1891 with joy and that they diligently read this (1896, 323). Accounts of the effects of new Bible translations in contemporary Melanesian communities indicate that these can be consequential (e.g., McDougall 2012; Handman 2017). Many John Frum luminaries were educated and literate, including Tom(my) Nampas and Nakomaha, who led the Movement when its focus moved in 1941 from Green Point to Sulphur Bay (Ipikel) on East Tanna. Nampas and Nakomaha were trained Presbyterian teachers; Nakomaha had attended the Presbyterian mission's Teachers Training Institute on Tangoa near Santo before he left to join the rival Seventh-day Adventist mission (MacClancy 2007, 205).

Aside from the two John namesakes, island readers of Revelation would certainly appreciate revelation itself. Inspiration remains the main method of knowledge production on Tanna, new knowledge received in dreams or divinations originating from ancestral spirits and other powerfully wise beings (Lindstrom 1990: 68–69). Just as angels appeared to John to reveal the future, so do island prophets acquire knowledge, as might well missionaries themselves when in tune with God (Gardner 2006: 303–304). Revelation's island readers/hearers would also appreciate aspects of the book's narrative structure. Patmos John's revelation mixed several songs or chants into prophesy (Krause 2009), e.g., 5:9 *Iraha hani nupu evi reti, mameni menwa, Ik amasan* ("They sang a new song, saying, You are good," or "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy . . ."). Tanna narrators and storytellers, prophets or not, likewise commonly combine song and story (Lindstrom 1990: 107–109).

Island readers certainly puzzled over Revelation's exotic and alien features, as indicated by Watt's numerous paraphrases and loanwords. They would have recognized, however, several key familiar elements including *nanumu-* ("spirits");





FIGURE 4. John Frum Supporters Raising an American Flag, February 15, 1979.

the concept of witnessing (1:5, *ketir ramavisau parhien*, “person who advises truthfully”); the benefits of virginity, or at least ritual abstinence from sex that men practice before important tasks (14:4, *Iraha i hapuk-auraha’ma irahame ya nebran*; *iraha nakur amasan*, “they here haven’t spoiled themselves with women; they are good people”); *kisup* (“trumpets”); *numeuien* (“plagues; earthquakes” 6:12); and *nakwategen afwe nap mene nerkwes krau-ara ira* (“lakes of fire and brimstone,” “the lake where fire and fumeroles/sulfur are in it” 20:10). Tanna’s Iasur volcano features pits, though not lakes, of fire. Many scholars believe the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 CE (Papandrea 2011, 54) influenced John of Patmos’s revelation. Island readers would also have shared Revelation’s condemnation of *navruhuien* (“sorcery” 18:23) and sorcerers. Leaders of new Melanesian religions, like John Frum on Tanna, always worried about sorcery, and sex, and their potential to disturb newly established social unities (Lindstrom 2011b; Forman 1982, 96).

Revelation spoke originally to Jewish Christian opponents and critics of the Roman empire. Jesus would soon return to exterminate evildoers, providing sweet revenge: “The apocalyptic tradition was addressed to an audience of men and women who regarded themselves as outsiders and victims even if they were not actually suffering oppression or persecution at any given time and place” (Kirsch 2006, 46; see also Witherington 2003: 160–161). Revelation has informed and sometimes sparked oppositional social movements in many times and places, which is why church authorities through the years typically restricted access to the text, attempting to control its interpretation. As Quispel and others have observed, “The Western church seemingly did everything in its power to ensure that nobody would understand the Apocalypse” (1979, 121).

The Tannese turned increasingly to resistance and opposition, particularly after Condominium authority set up on the island in 1912, and they likewise would have embraced Revelation’s message. John of Patmos urged his readers in several of the seven churches to “remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works” (2:5) (*Ataregra te nari teinu ik enaraka ira, mamareregumi ya reram, mamomi narimnaimine ine ik enakupan mo*, “Remember those things you have abandoned, and return to/recall again your innards/heart, to do those things you have done before”). John Frum likewise commanded that people return to traditional island *kastom*. John of Patmos evinced “fear and loathing of Roman coinage” (Kirsch 2006, 61; Metzger 1993, 76; Pagels 2012, 52), and he condemned traders and coinage that carried the mark of semi-divine Roman rulers: *Nermama hameriaru ya tuprana tu-abi mameau tuke in, te nari ine menwa yermama reti repuk-avahi’mami namri nari teniraha* (18:11, “Those who trade on earth will cry and wail over her, because a man won’t purchase anymore things from them,” or “And the merchants of the

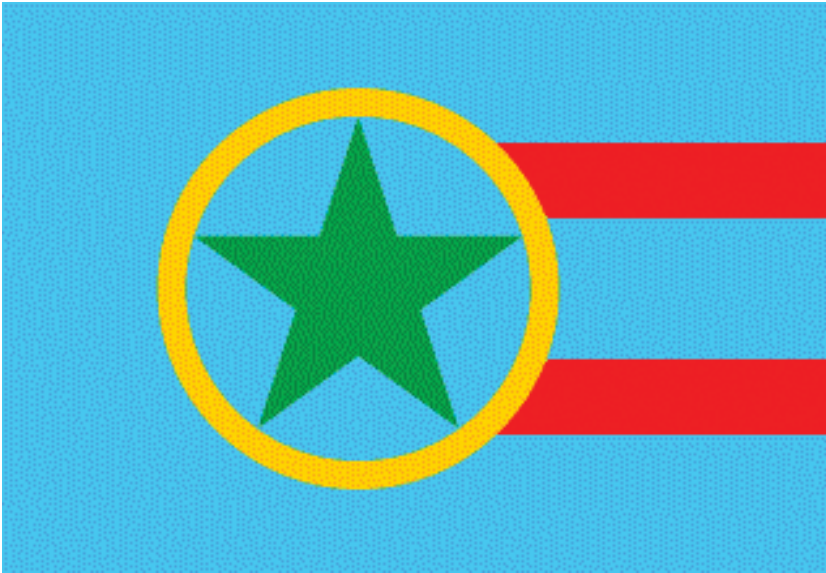


FIGURE 5. **The Morning Star Flag.**

earth shall weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise any more”). John Frum, too, instructed followers to toss foreign money into the sea, or to liquidate all savings with trade store purchases so to drive European copra buyers and traders off Tanna.

John Frum’s early prophecies of miscellaneous catastrophes and world reversals echoed Revelation’s more lethal Armageddon: “The island of Tanna would become flat, the mountains fill up the valleys, Tanna be joined to Aneityum and Erromanga, a new youthfulness and perfect health come to all” (Guiart 1952, 167). Only those who heeded his message, however, would benefit from foretold benefits, cargo or otherwise, nonbelievers to be left behind. The John Frum movement from the 1940s, like Revelation, would also boast the Tanna Army (9:16, *nemafiamē*; 19:19, *nakuoreme*, which means “fullness-PL”). Island dissidents should have also appreciated Revelation’s evocations of the four corners of the earth (7:1, *nukurui tuprana* for, “four corners of earth”) and the morning star (2:28, 22:16, *kofatatea*) (see Papandrea 2011, 144; Metzger 1993, 37). The Four Corners Movement, an offshoot of John Frum, sparked briefly in the 1970s (Guiart 1974). Although this fizzled for various reasons, supporters raised flags emblazoned with the morning stars on north, east, south, and west Tanna (Fig. 5). The morning star also featured

in the Prophet Fred Nase's Unity Movement, which in the early 2000s drew on John Frum roots (Tabani 2008, 180). Fred led several thousand followers up arid Iankahi ridge (between Port Resolution and Sulphur Bay) where they established a village that Fred named New Jerusalem, while waiting for world transformation (2008, 184).

Fred's New Jerusalem was an island incarnation of John of Patmos's Jerusalem evi (3:12, 21:2), shining capital of the foretold New Heaven and New Earth (Metzger 1993, 98): *Iau yak-ata neai evi mene tuprana evi* (21:1, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth"). When Jesus returns, and when John Frum returns, "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (21:4), *ne'meijen te-repuk-ara'mami, nabien, mene neauien, mene namisa-ien, tu-apuk-ara'mami; narimnarime kupan huvaven* ("there will no longer be sickness, sorrow, and wailing, and pain, they will no longer be; former things are dead"). Fred, along with Tanna's many other prophets over the years, may not have been diligent readers of Revelation (in Nafe, Bislama, English, or French), but Christianity and its myths, since 1842, have become integral constituents of island culture, available for inspired manipulation.

Vanuatu's nineteenth century Bible translations today are perhaps old news, but a close reading of these can repay with information about language history, the development of Bislama, changing language ideology, and the weight of Christianity and its sacred texts on island cultures and societies. As the Prophet invites, *Ketir nakwaregen ramara, in te-raregi narimnarime ine Nanumun Amasan renipen . . .* (2:7), "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith . . ."

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For useful comment, I thank participants at the 2018 Vanuatu Languages Conference (Port Vila) that celebrated the work of linguist John Lynch, along with the journal's reviewers.

### NOTES

1. Nafe is the language's island name, although linguists have followed missionaries in calling it Kwamera, the site of the Watt's first mission. I use both linguonyms in this article—Kwamera when referring to published or early texts. A comprehensive Nafe grammar is yet to be written, but Lindstrom and Lynch (1994) provide basic information on phonology, morphology, and syntax.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, Ron  
 1984 *In the land of strangers: A century of European contact with Tanna, 1774–1874*. Pacific Research Monograph number 9. Canberra: Australian National University.
- Buber, Martin and Franz Rosenzweig  
 1994 *Scripture and translation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Camden, Bill  
 1977 *A descriptive dictionary: Bislama to English*. Port Vila, Vanuatu: Moropa Bookshop.
- Crowley, Terry  
 1990 *Beach-la-Mar to Bislama: The emergence of a national language in Vanuatu*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Drinnon, David A.  
 2013 *The apocalyptic tradition in Scotland, 1588–1688*. PhD thesis, School of Scottish History, St. Andrews University.
- Ferguson, John A.  
 1918 *Bibliography of the New Hebrides, part 2*. Sydney: privately printed.
- Flexner, James L.  
 2016 *An archaeology of early Christianity in Vanuatu: Kastom and religious change on Tanna, and Erromango, 1839–1920*. Terra Australis 44. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- Forman, Charles W.  
 1982 *The island churches of the South Pacific: Emergence in the twentieth century*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Gardner, Helen B.  
 2006 “New heaven and new earth”: Translations and conversions on Aneityum. *The Journal of Pacific History* 41:293–311.
- Geraghty, Paul  
 2003 Foreigner talk to exonorm: Translation and literacy in Fiji. In *For better or worse: Translation as a tool for change in the South Pacific*, ed. S. Fenton, 171–206. London and New York: Routledge.
- Guiart, Jean  
 1952 John Frum Movement on Tanna. *Oceania* 22:165–177.  
 1956 *Un Siècle et Demi de Contacts Culturels à Tanna (Nouvelles-Hébrides)*. Paris: Musée de l’Homme.

- 1974 Le mouvement “Four Corner” à Tanna (1974). *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 46:107–111.

Handman, Courtney

- 2017 Walking like a Christian: Roads, translations, and gendered bodies as religious infrastructure in Papua New Guinea. *American Ethnologist* 44:315–327.

Humphreys, C. B.

- 1926 *The Southern New Hebrides: An ethnological record*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Inglis, J.

- 1887 *In the New Hebrides: Reminiscences of missionary life and work*. Edinburgh, UK: T. Nelson and Sons.

Kirsch, Jonathan

- 2006 *A history of the end of the world: How the most controversial book in the Bible changed the course of western civilization*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco.

Kraus, Mark S.

- 2009 The seven hymns of Revelation 4, 5, and 7. *Leaven* 17(4):1–7.

Lindstrom, Lamont

- 1986 *Kwamera Dictionary/Nikukua sai Nagkiariiten Nininife*. Pacific Linguistics Series C, No. 95. Canberra: Dept of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University.
- 1990 *Knowledge and power in a South Pacific society*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- 1993 *Cargo cult: Strange stories of desire from Melanesia and beyond*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- 2007 Bislama into Kwamera: Code-mixing and language change in Vanuatu. *Journal of Language Documentation and Conservation* 1(2):216–239.
- 2011a Naming and memory on Tanna, Vanuatu. In *Changing contexts—shifting meanings: Transformations of cultural traditions in Oceania*, ed. E. Hermann, 141–156. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- 2011b Personhood, cargo, and Melanesian social unities. In *Made in Oceania: Social movements, cultural heritage and the state in the Pacific*, eds. E. Hviding and K. Rio, 253–272. Oxford: Sean Kingston.

Lindstrom, Lamont and John Lynch

- 1994 *Kwamera*. Munich, Germany: Lincom Europa.

Lynch, John

- 1983 Switch-reference in Lenakel. In *Switch reference and universal grammar*, eds. J. Haiman and P. Munro, 209–221. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- 2001 *The linguistic history of southern Vanuatu*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.



Lynch, John and Terry Crowley

- 2001 *Languages of Vanuatu: A new survey and bibliography*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.

MacClancy, Jeremy

- 2007 Nakomaha: A counter-colonial life and its contexts: Anthropological approaches to biography. *Oceania* 77:191–214.

McDougall, Debra

- 2012 Stealing foreign words, recovering local treasures: Bible translation and vernacular literacy on Ranongga (Solomon Islands). *TAJA: The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 23:318–339.

Metzger, Bruce M.

- 1993 *Breaking the code: Understanding the Book of Revelation*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

Miller, J. Graham

- 1986 *Live: A history of church planting in the Republic of Vanuatu, book four 1881–1920*. Port Vila: Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu.

Murray, A. W.

- 1888 *The Bible in the Pacific*. London: James Nisbet & Co.

Nida, Eugene and Charles Taber

- 1974 *The theory and practice of translation*. Leiden, the Netherlands: E. J. Brill.

Pagels, Elaine

- 2012 *Revelations: Visions, prophecy, and politics in the Book of Revelation*. New York: Viking.

Papandrea, James L.

- 2011 *The Wedding of the lamb: A historical approach to the Book of Revelation*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications.

Patterson, George

- 1864 *Memoirs of the Rev. S. F. Johnston, the Rev. J. W. Matheson, and Mrs. Mary Johnston Matheson, missionaries on Tanna*. Philadelphia: W. S. & A. Martien.

Quispel, Giles

- 1979 *The secret Book of Revelation*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Ray, Sidney

- 1926 *A comparative study of the Melanesian island languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



Sridhar, S. N. and Kamal K. Sridhar

- 1980 The syntax and psycholinguistics of bilingual code mixing. *Canadian Journal of Psychology* 34(4):407–416.

Tabani, Marc

- 2008 *Une Pirogue pour le Paradis: le culte de John Frum a Tanna (Vanuatu)*. Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.

Watt, Agnes C. P.

- 1890 *Nakukua i Ramavisau Nakur Kameni Iraha ya Baibel*. Paisley, UK: J. and R. Parlane 1890.  
1896 *Twenty-five years' mission life on Tanna, New Hebrides*. Paisley, UK: J. and R. Parlane.

Witherington, Ben III

- 2003 *Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wycliffe Bible Translators

- 2013 *Nakukua Ikinan: Nəgiariien Vi sə Kumwesən Rinərihi Təriini Əknekin*. Orlando, FL: Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc.