

Fijian Medicine Man Predicts a New Age

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The Tuka cult of Fiji was first led by Ndugmoi (died 1887) who claimed to have prophetic and miraculous powers. It had been spiritually revealed to him that the ancestors of Fiji were to return soon. When they did:

- the Millennium would begin;
- the faithful would enter into Mburoto Kula, or Glorious Paradise;
- the ancient lands and independence would be restored (Fiji became an independent nation in 1970);
- the faithful would receive eternal life and pleasure, and;
- the unbelievers would die or be condemned to everlasting hell-fire or become the slaves of the believers.

The doctrines of the Tuka cult incorporated many traditional beliefs of the Fijian culture as well as elements derived from the Bible. The Fiji creation myth recounts the tale of three brothers who survived a great flood at the beginning of time. The most important of these was Ndengei, the snake god, who lived in a cave in the Nakaurandira Mountain, the Fijian Olympus (home of the gods). His movements caused the thunder to roar. "Here in his 108 cavern," the prophet Ndugmoi said, "the flames of hell might be seen by anyone brave enough to enter."

The other two brothers, Nathirikanmoli and Nakasambaria, were twins who often quarreled with Ndengei the snake god and made war with him. They were defeated and forced to sail away into exile. According to the Tuka cult, they arrived at the land of the white people where the Bible was written about them. In the Bible, the names Jehovah and Jesus were substituted for the names of the twins. The founder of the Tuka cult proclaimed that the twins would soon return to Fiji.

The facility with which the prophet and his followers combined Christianity and indigenous mythology may be seen in the following version of creation: In the beginning, there had been two gods, Jehovah and Ndengei. Jehovah challenged Ndengei to make a man from clay, but Ndengei was unable to do it. Jehovah, however, did make a man, and later a woman, and brought them to life. He then drove the vanquished Ndengei away and peopled the earth.

He told the people to build a house to reach as high as heaven itself, from which immortality could be brought down to earth. The house was built; each person contributed articles which he was skilled in manufacturing, and then the people named the goods. In this manner the present diversity of languages arose. When the house was completed, a huge feast was held of yams, taro, and plantains which sprang up on the spot.

Then Jehovah said, "Go! Spread throughout the land," and the people left, carrying with them the plants which had sprung up. They named themselves and populated the islands, the commoners first, then the chiefs.

Not only does the above story clearly parallel the Bible account of creation (Genesis 1-3) and the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11), but one old man declared that the mythological carpenter-god Rotolo was none other than Noah.

Also the Fijians insist that they had always known Jehovah, that Jehovah had not been introduced by the Christian missionaries who first arrived in Fiji 100 years ago. The prophet Ndugmoi renamed the days of the week after figures in the flood legend and renamed places around his village: Roma (Rome), Iljipta (Egypt), Kolosa (Colossians) and similar names. These and other biblical names were also common to Fijians before any missionaries came to Fiji.

True vestiges of the Tuka movement appeared in a cult recorded after World War II. This group was led by Kelevi, a medicine man from Kandavu, one of the islands of Fiji. Kelevi claimed to have had news of the imminent return of the twins who had been living in Germany and other European countries, giving manna and wisdom to their inhabitants. Kelevi's doctrine itself stressed the achievement of eternal life in a New World, the Kingdom of Christ on this earth.