R esidents of Port Vila watched in panic as a fleet of dark ships appeared on the southern horizon on the morning of 4 May 1942. That same day, the Japanese invaded and captured Tulagi, the colonial capital of British Solomon Islands northwest of the New Hebrides. To the west, opposing naval forces fought the Battle of the Coral Sea blocking Japanese plans to occupy Port Moresby in Australian Papua. Those nervous watchers sheltering in Port Vila were relieved to spot American colors as the fleet approached. These ships, guarded by naval escorts, carried Task Force 9156’s 6,500 men, comprised mostly of the old Buffalo Soldiers African American 24th Infantry Regiment and the 4th Field Artillery Battalion. The ships were crammed with cargo: trucks, jeeps, Quonset huts, seaplanes, bulldozers, hospital equipment, seacoast guns, radio stations, refrigerators, ammunition, a million dollars in US currency, and more.

Port Vila then boasted only rudimentary docks, and cargo laden on these ships and many more to come had to be winched onto smaller boats and lightered ashore. Those Buffalo Soldiers were onboard for good reason. African Americans offloaded and stored cargo, drove trucks, and worked other service jobs until, near the war’s end, domestic pressure at home convinced political and military authorities to let them fight. But the regiment needed help, especially as military planners rushed to complete a nearby airfield, build roads, construct a large hospital, and set up water, electrical, and telephone systems. Working through Condominium authorities, the Americans recruited native labor corps, first rounding up men on Efate and then on the nearby Shepherd Islands. Needing still more hands, they soon swept up nearly all able-bodied men from Tanna and shipped them north to Efate’s new wartime installations.

In August 1942, the military cargo ship Cape Flattery on her way north from New Caledonia moored off Lenakel to load up Tanna recruits. Islanders then called any sizeable ship like this a “mail boat.” District Agent James Nicol ordered his assessors to round up island workers, appointing gang bosses from
every corner of Tanna. John Frum already had prepared the way. Island men were ready to go. Assessor Nagia named Thomas Nouar and his nephew Nako Georgy as boss men over the Nepraineteta, the “body of the canoe,” the valley that runs from Iasur Volcano east toward Port Resolution. Soarum’s teenaged grandsons Rapi and Iau came down from Samaria to join the region’s team of nearly one hundred men.

Nouar had some schooling and was young and ambitious. He was also a Seventh-day Adventist, or had been. After missionary William Watt and his family retired to Melbourne, Australia in 1910, island deacons and elders supervised Port Resolution’s Presbyterian congregation. By the 1930s, however, distance from the main mission station at White Sands and economic disruptions of the global depression shredded Presbyterian enthusiasm. Taking advantage of this apathy, rival SDA missionaries found willing converts. People liked the different sabbath day, and pork taboos were perhaps no more onerous than Presbyterian bans on kava drinking. SDA converts learned American four-part harmonics, domestic cooking skills, and boosted their goat herds. Most of these disciples, including Nouar, would shortly forsake SDA affiliations a few years later in 1939 when John Frum materialized.

Called to gather in Lenakel, the Body of the Canoe work team prepared a farewell feast. Men roasted pigs, drank a last round of kava, and marched all night crossing the island. At daybreak, they sat on the beach, watching the horizon. SS Cape Flattery appeared at daybreak and anchored in Lenakel passage. American agents boated ashore, counted and medically examined the recruits, and recorded their names. They handed out dog tags. Nouar’s number was 66. The beach filled with sobbing women and children. As men waited to board, American sailors called for them to “dance, dance.” And while aboard Cape Flattery, too, the work teams continued to dance making the ship’s steel decks ring.

Everyone embarked, the Cape Flattery sailed north at dusk arriving in Port Vila the next morning. Island recruits came ashore and were trucked to encampments scattered around the town. Nouar and his men found themselves sleeping in tents at Tebakor, near newly established American troop bivouacs. They went to work immediately, offloading cargo ships that steamed into Vila Harbor. They served ten-hour shifts, some working during the day, and some overnight, seven days a week, bringing cargo up from ships’ holds and moving this from dock to trucks to newly constructed warehouses. They offloaded ammunition, fuel drums, and crates of food, unpacking ships’ holds layer by layer. “Sometimes we came to work and carried out bombs,” Nouar recalled. “We worked one ship each week. When this ship was finished, it left and another ship came. After we
unloaded it, trucks carried away the food, the bombs, and the Marsden matting for the airport.” Nouar and his gang kept dancing. American sailors on the ships and soldiers on the docks called out dance requests. “If the night was cold, the Americans said, ‘okay, dance, dance, dance!’”

Condominium authorities first insisted on managing Islander labor corps, only lending these to the US military. The colonials were edgy that the war could upend comfortable racial inequalities, and anxious that Americans not overpay workers causing future plantation wage inflation. After a month of colonial management, Nouar and other island workers complained bitterly about the food that Condominium authorities provided. “They gave us Fiji taro and rotten bananas, woody manioc, stinking salt meat. People nearly died the hunger was so bad.” Nouar brought a plate of putrid food over to the American camp and spoke to a supervisor. Together, they went to consult a military officer based on Iririki Island:

He took the food and led me, with police coming along with guns. We two went to find the bigmen in their office; one was white and one black. We went in and they discussed the problem and, that evening, the Americans had already sent us rice. And they gave us meat. And gave us different kinds of fruit, and all different foods. And they gave us clothes; they stacked up clothing in a huge pile. Trousers, coats, you passed by and if you saw your size you took it. And books, and hats, and shirts.

The US military had neither time nor patience for colonial decorum and none for colonial incompetence. After that first month, it assumed responsibility for housing, feeding, and supervising the labor corps. Colonel Steven D. Slaughter, general staff officer in charge of logistics, took command assisted by Major George Riser, helped by Sergeant Edward F. Power and Navy Boatswain Thomas Beatty (figure 8). Power and Beatty bunked in or near the workers’ camp and memory of both endures on Tanna, today: Beatty as John Frum’s American confident Tom Navy, and Power as a feisty amateur boxer who tutored young island workers in the sport.

Nouar recalled a continuous flow of hearty food and supplies: “America provided the food we ate; we ate until we were full then threw it away. They gave us food, gave us clothing, gave us shoes, boots, coats, long coats for the cold nights when we worked. Blankets, we slept in blankets. Pots, plates, forks, knives, everything.” Pairs of men from the Nepraineneta gang rotated cooking responsibilities. American supervisors also loaded up Tanna workers with cigarettes,
converting most into lifelong smokers with a particular penchant for unfiltered Camels that endures on the island.

After several months at Tagabe, Nouar and his work team moved to another camp near Bauerfield, the newly cleared landing strip where they built village-style housing. Riser (or his teasing friends) named the workers’ camp Riserville. After military activity shifted north to extensive new installations on Espiritu Santo, cargo ship arrivals at Port Vila slowed. Nouar witnessed the beginnings of base installations on Santo. He caught a ride north on a US ship that also called at Malo and Malakula Islands. Back in Vila, the labor corps went to work building roads and spraying DDT on water sources to control malaria. They interacted with additional US servicemen besides their labor supervisors. Nouar befriended one officer who suffered from asthma. When not working the docks, he visited to fan him, keeping him cool. Nouar also met a black American soldier named Jesse and others named Thomas, Walter, and Captain West. Tanna workers were particularly impressed by African American soldiers. Nouar knew that the 24th Infantry Regiment had its own encampment, although he did not appreciate the depth of contemporary American racial segregation.

**Figure 8.** Colonel Riser (center), Sergeant Power (right) with Tanna workers at Riserville and possibly Thomas Beatty, back right, 1942. Photo owned by author; courtesy of Colonel Steven D. Slaughter.
Instead, Tannese workers noted favorably that black men like themselves worked dock machinery, drove jeeps, trucks, and tractors, and managed the storage of military cargo.

The noise and constant hubbub of wartime Port Vila astonished island workers who until then were unfamiliar with trucks, electric lighting, aircraft carriers, airplanes circling and landing, anti-aircraft artillery, and a harbor full of cargo ships. Strange radar systems installed on towers and in trees and air raid klaxons particularly impressed them. They called both stil (steal) or glas (glass) and made ready comparisons with their own island power stones that also reveal and identify hidden forces.

Nouar and his team found time to watch American movies at a new outdoor military cinema built on Malapoa Point, or in a makeshift theater in Riserville. Some Islanders went into the curio business, making bark skirts and carvings to sell to servicemen. They occasionally drank beer secretly with Americans, or jungle juice, a home brew fermented with yeast and tinned fruit. They regularly disappointed Americans who were on the hunt for local women, telling them “we too have no women in Vila.” American soldiers and sailors spoke no Bislama, but Tanna workers quickly learned pertinent military slang including suk, a term for sex that survives in Hawaiian Pidgin English. Nouar was thankful that women were scarce. He was suspicious of the condoms he came across during the war, and figured that if aroused soldiers had stumbled across some vulnerable girl, “she would have died!”

Nouar worked a year on Efate for the Americans. Some Islanders went home after three months, while others shipped north to take their place. Others served for several years. Wages were not great, 25 cents a day following colonial regulation, but many workers earned extra money laundering uniforms, climbing coconut trees, sweeping barracks, or even just dancing. Workers returned home to Tanna with caches of American coinage, clothing, blankets, dynamite, and other souvenirs, although Condominium authorities attempted to confiscate this. Nouar held onto his military dog tag, number 66, until it disappeared years later in one of his houses that decayed and collapsed.

Nouar and his fellow labor recruits were amazed by wartime sights and sounds, but not completely surprised. Nor were they frightened. John Frum, after all, had foretold what to expect. Nouar explained:

John Frum had already told people that men would come. America. They would arrive and that when we meet America, don’t be afraid. We knew that our brothers were coming. John Frum had already predicted this to us
so we weren’t afraid of dying. He advised us that Americans would come. We were ignorant of planes and he was the first to say that planes would arrive. We were ignorant of lots of things but he said that trucks would arrive. Our trucks would come. Our planes would come. Our ships would come. Since then we have understood, and today black men have all these things. John Frum was the first to say the name of America. We know that he spoke truly in that we saw America arrive.

As the battle front moved northwest, operations at the US bases on Efate and Espiritu Santo peaked and then declined. The Americans, though, did not fully pullout until 1946. That year, mortuary teams arrived to exhume several hundred US burials at Port Vila’s Freshwater Cemetery, shipping remains home mostly to Hawai’i’s Punchbowl National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. War echoes linger, though, in Efate’s road system and in Vanuatu’s main international airport, Bauerfield, named after Marine fighter pilot Harold (“Joe”) Bauer, shot down in action off Guadalcanal. Tourists who land on Bauerfield may find their way to a couple of local museums on Efate’s north shore that curate all sorts of wartime detritus. And on Tanna, returning workers swiftly incorporated an array of military practices and symbols into John Frum ceremony. The movement smartly acquired drill teams, an army, red and black crosses, radio antennae, model airplanes, and more.

Home on Tanna, Nouar in the 1950s edged away from the John Frum movement and rejoined the Seventh-day Adventist mission. He took advantage of mission opportunities to travel widely, and he continued his leadership responsibilities, particularly after island converts assumed management of the Port Resolution SDA congregation. Most of his family has followed him into that church, including a granddaughter who married today’s Soarum, from Samaria. Like John Frum, who celebrated his connections both with Tanna and with America, Nouar sought to deepen relationships with his American brothers. He appreciated the war’s shared dangers and recalled its brotherly cooperation. If American servicemen gave much to Tanna workers, Islanders balanced accounts with their own solid support and hard work. Americans were young but good men, Nouar said, and “love was in them.” But love was in the Tannese, too.

In 1989, I carried home to Tulsa, Oklahoma, a letter that Nouar had dictated and I delivered this to a neighborhood SDA pastor. Nouar, partly, was angling for a wristwatch that would remind him of his American wartime companions. One, he said, that would permit him “to see their faces again in it.” Mostly, though, he just wondered, “Do they remember us, or have they forgotten?”
War

A century before American troop ships anchored in Port Vila’s harbor, the Tannese studied their own wars. As had Nouar, so did Nouar’s namesake of the 1840s and 1860s. Missionary chroniclers, especially the great Presbyterian propagandist John G. Paton, complained often of black-hearted Tanna assassins and bloody ambushes. Denigrations of dark Tanna justified Evangelical projects and the mission agenda of “winning cannibals” for Christ. This proved difficult. The series of pandemics that swept through the island beginning in the 1830s stoked intensifying intercommunal violence as survivors sought balance and revenge.

Islanders initiated an arms race, adding European muskets to their arsenals of clubs, slingshots, throwing stones, and spears. Flows of weaponry into Tanna increased significantly from the 1860s when many men and boys, and some women and girls, recruited to work on plantations in Queensland, Fiji, or Samoa, returned home with guns, powder, and bullets. People blamed missionaries, as well as one another, for the era’s rampant death and disease. On Elau’s Erromango Island, having dispatched John Williams and James Harris in 1839, Islanders two decades later would kill several other worrisome Presbyterian missionaries including, the Canadian missionary brothers George and James Gordon who set up stations on the island.

Missionary accounts of Nouar find him at Port Resolution, then on Aneityum, and later on Aniwa. Men then, as now, traveled around. In the 1850s, Nouar was living at Port Resolution, near the Fishtale’s tip. Around 1855, he canoed to Aneityum to visit the Presbyterian establishment there, and he agreed to host two Aneityumese teachers, Abraham and Nimtiwan, who joined him back on Tanna. When Scottish missionaries John Paton and Joseph Copeland arrived at the Port in 1858, Nouar looked after them as well although this sparked a critical and sometimes violent response from his neighbors who blamed their ill health on the immigrant Europeans.

During Paton’s three years at Port Resolution, Nouar supported the mission in regular community discussions and debates. More than once he rescued Paton from harm, for example warning him not to eat a poisonous fish. Paton wrote:

The Chief Nowar Noukamara, usually known as Nowar, was my best and most-to-be-trusted friend. He was one of the nine or ten who were most favourable to the Mission work, attending the Worship pretty regularly, conducting it also in their own houses and villages, and making generally
a somewhat unstable profession of Christianity. One or more of them often accompanied me on Sabbath, when going to conduct the Worship at inland villages; and sometimes they protected me from personal injury.

Paton hoped to deploy Nouar, whose influence he imagined extended eight to ten miles inland from Port Resolution, to spread the gospel. Nouar, however, was more concerned with defusing escalating island violence. He hosted a large feast and dispute-settlement meeting at which he declaimed “that all war and fighting be given up on Tanna, that no more people be killed by Nahak, for witchcraft and sorcery were lies.”

War (naruagenien) and violence, however, continued to spark. Himself targeted by sorcerers, Nouar begged to retreat with Paton to Aneityum Island, but Paton refused. Desperate, Nouar dropped his Christian shirt and lavalava for penis wrapper and face paint to keep his head a little lower. In January 1862, angry inland villagers met and decided to chase Paton and his Aneityumese teachers off the island and a regional war broke out. Again protecting Paton, Nouar took a spear in his right knee. His son-in-law Faimugo guided Paton’s overland escape south to John and Mary Matheson’s station at Kwamera, leaving Nouar behind to defend himself as best he could.

Paton grudgingly appreciated Nouar’s patronage and his peace-making, but called him changeable, doubtful, wavering, unstable, cowardly, and of struggling faith. Mary Matheson was kinder. She met Nouar at Port Resolution in May 1860 when he helped paddle her ashore. She lent him her old brown hat which made him “a very comical looking figure head.” Paton’s second wife Maggie also appreciated Nouar’s efforts to establish a new Christian peace. Paton and Maggie returned to the New Hebrides in 1866, but holed up on the small Polynesian-speaking islet Aniwa, off Tanna’s east coast. In November 1867 she gushed, “Oh, how I loved and respected him!—this man that risked his life to save my husband. I had read of such devoted love, but have never seen another living specimen . . . he showed me the very scars on his body, where he had received the wounds intended for ‘my Missi.’”

Nouar met Paton again during a brief return to Port Resolution. There, he found Shark, or a Pavegen namesake, and charged him with Paton’s keep, so Mrs. Paton wrote:

It seems that, when dear old Nowar found he could not have his old Missi [missionary] back again, he took Pavingin aside and told him that he now gave Missi Paton into his charge, and begged him earnestly to do everything
he could to make him comfortable, and to tell the people of Aniwa to be strong to do the Worship of Jehovah. . . . then finished up by taking the white shells from his own arm, binding them round Pavingin’s, and telling him to wear them, and every time he looked at them to remember his words about being kind to Missi. 5

Noaur along with a hundred other Tannese took refuge on Aniwa in 1875, escaping from the ongoing bloody violence and warfare that continued to unsettle Port Resolution. Maggie might have welcomed her dear old Nouar, but Paton refused to baptize him, always suspicious of his essential Christian convictions.

Nouar later returned home to Tanna, or a namesake took his place back on the island. The Nouar of the 1930s and 1940s had moved inland, about a mile south of the harbor. It was here that he encountered the Seventh-day Adventists and then the American military. His ancestral namesake had worked persistently to restore peace to Tanna, building missionary alliances, hosting regional debates and feasts, evoking new religious harmonies, lamenting wounds and scars, and manipulating white shell armlets. Forty years of devastating illness, killings, and precipitous wars abated only toward the end of the century, after many island men and women had left Tanna to work on Queensland’s cane plantations and cattle operations; after the arms race equalized and everyone brandished Snider-Enfield breech-loading rifles; and after the island population had crashed but then began to stabilize. People had enough of sickness, warfare, and death. Multiplying Christian conversions after 1900 dampened Tanna’s communal violence for good.

Tanna today remains a reasonably peaceful place with few murders. Husbands and wives may get feisty and occasionally bash each other, but kin and neighbors rush in quickly to soothe spiraling emotions. Neighbors argue about rights to land and about pigs who steal from gardens. Men hold grudges quietly for years, but only occasionally flame into mad rages. Everyone watches for violence, and hurries to appease and mollify antagonists before things get out of hand. Social relationships sometimes can be raucous, but namarinuien (peace) is the main goal. With no traditional central political authority, and a distant government, Islanders are notably skilled at debating their problems, settling disputes, or at least avoiding one another until tempers cool. Parents indulge children, rarely striking them. Older children are schooled not to smack younger siblings but rather let smaller ones cuff them instead. People have reclaimed all sorts of the power stones that their forebears surrendered when admitted to church membership except for the nukwei nabak, the magic stones
of death. Namarinuien, that peace and calmness of the seas and skies, and in relations among neighbors and family, with foresight and effort ordinarily can be achieved.

Still, echoes of island violence and war redounded in the memories and life experiences of some elders when America arrived in 1942. John Frum prophecy stoked men’s martial enthusiasm. They took the war as a new chance to paint their faces. They read the military’s compound bureaucratic structure (army, army airforce, navy, marines, seabees, and Negro) in terms of Tanna’s own moiety system that once shaped bellicose island allegiances. The stars and stripes, for the Tannese who combine lighter blue colors with green, and darker ones with black, was appropriately colored red, white, and black. Quonset huts reminded them of kuvipehe, the island’s traditional house whose roof descends low to the ground. Islanders revised Tanna origin stories that narrate a mythic separation of the two original brothers Nuras and Patras, one staying on Tanna, the other lost away in America but now returned in force. The war celebrated their reunion. Magicians on Tanna withdrew to dense forests and shady caves, working their war power stones to ensure an American victory over Japan. American soldiers were their lost and found brothers-in-law from across the sea.

**Dance and Song**

Captain Cook, sailing away from Port Resolution at daybreak, 20 August 1774, caught a noise coming from the tip of the Fishtail “which was not unlike singing of Psalms.” Ship naturalist Johann Forster, too, heard “a slow solemn song or dirge” coming from the point. Missionaries Mathesons, Johnston, and Paton likewise appreciated song. Good disciples of John Calvin who advocated hymning the psalms, they liked to join their voices in praise. On Tanna, they cast about for a Nafe word for hymn and found nupu, which can indeed mean song but also dance. They and their subsequent Christian converts translated more than 140 Presbyterian hymns into Nafe, and composed many new ones.

Whereas missionaries discriminated sacred song from mundane and possibly unholy dance, Tanna folk integrally connect voice and body. Nupu is the island’s main circle dance which, like most southern hemispheric circle dances, rotates counterclockwise. Men dance together in a central cluster. Women form pairs to skip rapidly around this masculine nucleus. With no accompanying musical instruments, dancers create a rhythmic beat by clapping, stomping, humming, and singing. Islanders have other, choreographically more intricate dance styles, particularly those presented during regional pig-killing (nakwiari) festivals.
that incorporate clever miming performances. *Nupu*, though, is the usual village standard.

Celebrations of a boy’s circumcision, his first shave, a marriage, or a death involve an exchange between principal families of raw and cooked garden produce, pigs, kava, plaited baskets and mats, women’s bark skirts, blankets, and two-meter lengths of calico cloth. After eating, speech making, and kava drinking at dusk, celebrants begin *nupu* dancing on the village’s kava clearing. Hosts lead off and then alternate dance sets with their guests. Dance continues throughout that night until daybreak, although some feast organizers in recent years have shortened dancing and moved this from night to day. People also dance *nupu* to mark other important occasions including Vanuatu’s national day of independence, every 30 July, or the visits of politicians and other luminaries. Nowadays, entrepreneurial villagers arrange daytime *nupu* performances for passing tourists and charge them to watch and photograph.

Dancing on the decks of American cargo ships in Port Vila Harbor, Nouar and his World War II work gang jumped into *nupu* to entertain sailors and soldiers. Nouar recalled that they also performed other circle dance styles, including *nupu ikou* and *tarakini*. The stomping of dancers’ feet on ships’ steel decks produced a satisfying ringing thunder, reminiscent of the booming, volcanic soils back home on Tanna. Wartime dancing echoed island partnerships: Two sides united in some shared celebration of enterprise. Despite exhausting work unloading cargo, Nouar and his team nonetheless were pleased to dance. Goofy Americans sailors and soldiers joined in. “They called to us, ‘dance, dance!’ . . . when we danced some came to dance with us, to try to dance, too. They tried to dance like us. They swung their arms and stomped their feet.”

Dance is also song. Feast organizers, properly to celebrate an occasion, commission songsmiths to find new songs. Customarily, these songsmiths receive gifts of kava and a white fowl. They retire to some secluded forest glade to listen for ancestral voices, eating chicken and drinking kava. Relying on inspiration, rather than personal creativity, expert island songsmiths tap into the world of buzzing spirits, eavesdropping on ancestral lyrics and melodies. A newly revealed *nupu*, once the songsmith reappears to teach this, often celebrates the festive occasion and the leading men and women involved. Villagers practice dancing the song, and then perform for their admiring guests. The *nupu* becomes part of a family’s repertoire, although many *nupu* from times past have lost connection with particular families (or name-sets) and belong to everyone associated with a particular kava clearing.
Songs serve as an important historical archive. *Nupu* associated with this or that place chronicle past namesakes’ achievements and remarkable local events. Every feast, every exchange brings these to mind as dancers tap into a thick repertoire of song. Island stories typically feature snatches of a song that ornament narrative myth, legend, or folktale. Orators and storytellers embellish truth claims by breaking into song, into some informative chant that asserts and reminds as an audience listens. Before he died, missionary Samuel Johnston described island orators working the crowd at one 1858 public meeting that he attended at Port Resolution:

When these orators wish to show particular honour to the meeting and to interest the audience, they sing a portion of their address. The speaker walks the length of the ground occupied by him while speaking. While doing so, he sings a verse. He returns in silence, apparently composing another verse. After thus singing a number of spontaneous poetical effusions, he concludes his speech in prose.⁶

Only the poetical effusions that Johnston caught (but could not understand) were neither spontaneous nor composed on the spot. Orators, instead, would have sung familiar family lyrics to assert some specific point or claim.

The Pacific War inspired Tanna’s labor corps recruits to come up with new songs to chronicle their wartime experiences. Entertaining American military personnel, Nouar and his work team sang island *nupu* as they danced. They also picked up American wartime standards including the Navy’s *Anchors Away* and *You Are My Sunshine*. The war sparked a new musical genre based on the string band when Islanders acquired guitars and ukuleles. This style remains popular today, although augmented and renovated over the years with strong musical borrowings from global reggae and rap.

Tanna songsmiths went to work, singing their war experience as *nupu* and as string band tunes. A song from Nouar’s gang (translated from Nafe) recalls the night march to Lenakel and transport to Port Vila on *Cape Flattery*:

> We were living well. Then heard the message the government sent first to people of White Sands;  
> We got up and left to try to find out. The mail boat was coming,  
> Our hearts were sad;  
> Daylight broke. The soldier counted us. Hunger took us and our hearts remembered our homes;
Up the gangway, the soldier counting. Some went aft; some went forward; 
Looking landward we saw two airplanes coming; looking upward we saw two stars on the wings; 
Someone called out to us. We carried our portmanteaus, filled two launches and arrived at Ballande’s wharf; 
The American bosses divided us and led us to Iariki plantation.

War songs, like this from the 1940s, continue to remind people of wartime events just as earlier mission hymns circulated news of biblical personages and God’s grace, and as nupu celebrate ancestral lives. Every dance incarnates the spirits. Every song reprises history. In song, Nouar of the 1840s and Nouar of the 1940s are recollected and reanimated.

Notes

1. This and subsequent quotations derive from a recorded interview with Thomas Nouar, 1983.

Further Readings

*Wartime New Hebrides and Tannese Labor Corps*


_Tanna Magic_


_Pacific War Songs_