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KLEVA : SOME HEALERS IN CENTRAL
ESPIRITU SANTO, VANUATU

TOMAS LUDVIGSON

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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COMMENT, AND NOTIFICATION OF
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TO MY PARENTS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an ethnographic account of the kleva of central Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu - a handful of healers credited with powers beyond those of their neighbours. Their concerns include matters like illness, sorcery, witchcraft, spirits and dreaming. The account is based on seventeen months field research among the Kiai-speaking population on the south-east side of the upper Ari valley in south central Santo.

My method is primarily descriptive. In the main body of the thesis I give accounts of face-to-face encounters and conversations with the kleva and their neighbours, attempting to build up a picture of the kleva that takes into consideration not only what they do, but also the meaning of their activities for themselves and for their neighbours.

In the conclusion I discuss the relevance of my material to some problems in the ethnography of Melanesian religions. I also raise issues of interpretation, seen to lie at the core of both topic and method in ethnographic pursuits.