

Vision and Reality in Pacific Religion



EDITED BY PHYLLIS HERDA,
MICHAEL REILLY AND DAVID HILLIARD

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in Pacific Religion*

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ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF NIEL GUNSON

EDITED BY PHYLLIS HERDA,
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In honour of Niel Gunson

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Vision and Reality in Pacific Religion

An Introduction

Michael Reilly and Phyllis Herda

The following essays explore the religious history of the Pacific Islands, from Melanesia and the northern tip of Australia in the west, to Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands and the Society Islands in the east. Diverse regionally, this collection is also premised on the integration of the many gods or spiritual beings indigenous to the islands and the diverse visions or understandings of foreign gods, such as Christianity's Jehovah, which have developed as a result of contact with missionary religions in the past couple of centuries. The spiritual beings who have long dwelt in the lands of Oceania and the newer visions of the foreign deities have experienced relations that at times have been subject to forms of contestation as well as partial collaboration. The result has been, as Vilsoni Hereniko points out, the creation of today's 'traditional' Pacific Islands societies.¹

Starting with indigenous deities, this collection explores the contact with the Christian Godhead, as well as other outside religions, and the establishment of the local variant forms of Christianity which grew up throughout the many islands of the Pacific. Defining religion in a way that meaningfully encompasses

all these instantiations is difficult. In the magisterial *The Golden Bough*, Sir James Frazer was very aware of this problem and advised any writer to fix on a meaning and proceed thereafter to hold to it consistently.² The most common definitions describe religion as a 'set of beliefs and practices' or a 'particular system of faith and worship'.³ Such beliefs or faith are concerned with the human effort to form and maintain, through worshipful practices, a 'right relationship' with various 'superhuman entities' or 'spiritual beings', who require 'propitiation or conciliation' in order to obtain their favour. Needless to say, those humans who sustain this relationship themselves obtain power and authority within the society they serve.⁴ If religion exists at the heart of every human culture, this is especially the case in the Pacific Islands. The people of the Pacific have been described as 'deeply religious', with most Islanders actively following a faith. The importance of religion and its institutions in the Pacific is marked further by the extent of their deep involvement in all parts of island society, including services such as education and medicine.⁵

All the writers of these essays are joined through the content matter of their historical subject and they are also linked by various intellectual affiliations, which have been important in the formulation of their research and writing. All the contributors have at some stage in their careers spent time as doctoral students at the well-recognised centre for Pacific historical scholarship, The Australian National University. While the academic structure within which they were students has changed according to the varying political and funding imperatives foisted on academia by Australian Federal Ministers, there has been a greater degree of intellectual coherence with regard to their formation as scholars. Pacific historians, whether from the metropolis or the islands themselves, have stressed an understanding of historical processes as they were experienced within the many islands of Oceania. As part of this engagement with local places and peoples, Pacific historians

stress the practice of fieldwork.⁶ The islands such a historian writes about are not simply abstract locations inscribed in a document or on a map but become very real places, which are filled with personal experiences. Within such lived moments, Pacific historians situate their thinking and writing about the larger themes of historical process. This emphasis on a personal experience of the Pacific has deep roots within the discipline of Pacific History. According to Niel Gunson, J. W. Davidson, who held the foundation chair of Pacific History at The Australian National University, always emphasised the importance of experience gained through ‘participant history’.⁷

In that sense, Pacific historians have been far ahead of their colleagues in countries such as New Zealand, where writing about Maori or Pacific Islanders, even in the academic subject of Maori Studies, has never carried such a similar emphasis on what amounted to a form of anthropological fieldwork. As a result of this emphasis, some Pacific History scholars have ended up spending a substantial part of their thesis time in particular islands. The Australian National University campus frequently became no more than a writing space in the final stages of the doctoral thesis. Pacific historians were formulating an interdisciplinary practice long before many other scholars had even contemplated such a notion.⁸

If the scholars contributing to this collection on Pacific religious history are joined institutionally and by their academic practice, they also share a common PhD supervisor, Niel Gunson, who for many exemplifies the best in Pacific History scholarship. It is Niel and his work that we collectively honour in this volume.

Before introducing the essay topics in this collection, it is appropriate to reflect on the scholarly contributions of Niel, crucial as they have been to the intellectual formation of all the contributors. The work of ‘Niel’s students’, to adopt a common nickname for this group, suggests the diversity of their supervisor’s own interests in the Pacific and beyond. The breadth of Niel’s knowledge and

interests are well captured in his authoritative work about the Protestant Pacific Islands missions, *Messengers of Grace*,⁹ which describes the social backgrounds, theologies and activities of the missionaries as well as the people and cultures of the Pacific whom they had come to convert. His profound and seemingly limitless knowledge of the finer points of Protestant theology constantly combines with a deep interest in genealogy and indigenous history. A long engagement with indigenous Pacific Islands history, especially in Polynesia, has enabled Niel to go beyond the usual confines of a European-oriented mission historiography and to emphasise, in common with other Pacific scholars, a strong sense of Polynesian agency. He has shown how Polynesians, in particular, received Christianity on their own terms with the result that the original missionary intentions were subtly changed to suit local conditions and expectations. It is this dual focus on the beliefs and practices of Europeans and Pacific Islanders that has informed the writers of these essays on Pacific religious history. Here, the influence of their former supervisor is most clearly revealed.

The diversity of topics written about by the contributors to this history of Pacific religions suggests another important contribution of Niel's supervision well remembered by his students. Whereas many academic supervisors pressure their students to pursue topics and lines of inquiry of more interest to themselves, Niel encourages his students to find their own way through a topic. He is always interested to learn about new materials, especially from the vernacular manuscripts and oral traditions of the various Pacific Islands. Niel has always been a strong supporter of students possessing skills in speaking and reading the vernacular languages of the Pacific, believing that this knowledge will unlock much new information and insights into the dynamics of Pacific Island history before and after European contact. For his students, such support combines with a distinctly empowering style of supervision that recognises the distinctive scholarly contribution of the student as

an authority in his or her own right. Such a collegial relationship is carried on through an intensive process of supervision, often involving weekly meetings, during which the student speaks about their work and any problems being encountered while Niel listens and makes the occasional comment, gives advice or direction, which not infrequently extricates the student from some blind alley of inquiry. Such empathic sensitivity combined with a passionate commitment to a tradition of scholarly rigour in terms of language, thinking and referencing has bequeathed to many of Niel's students a strong commitment to high standards of thought, writing and research.

The first essay in this collection is by Phyllis Herda and explores the Tongan myths of Hikule'ō; in particular, the connection between gender and hierarchy in the archipelago's oral traditions. Havea Hikule'ō has been described as female by some Palangi scholars, by others as male, and by yet others as bisexual; it is a debate that seems of less issue to Tongans themselves. According to Herda, Hikule'ō was born from the incestuous union of Taufulifonua and Havealolofonua, themselves descended from a previous incestuous union of the eldest twins in the 'primary creation genealogy'. In the myths, Hikule'ō is represented as being relatively inactive and associated with a chiefly rank. More particularly, Hikule'ō's situation reflects that of the elder sister, who, in Tongan society, is surrounded with the greatest respect (*faka'apa'apa*), while her more active brothers carry the political authority (*pule*). As Herda describes the situation: 'Like a chief ... or a sister within a Tongan family, she just "is" and so brings honour and divinity to her sibling set.' Her spouseless and childless state also accords with the historical position of early Tu'i Tonga Fefine, who could not marry because there was no male high enough in rank except her brother with whom any union was excluded by a social prohibition on sibling incest. Similarly, the offering of first fruits to Hikule'ō by the Tu'i Tonga emphasised the

relationship between the political ruler and the origin deity (*ngaahi 'otua tupu'a*). It showed the duty (*fatongia*) owed by the former as the brother's child (*fakafotu*) towards his father's sister (*mehekitanga*). Hikule'o is also presented in stories about Pulo-tu, or the gods' afterworld, as either a fierce, unpleasant being or a more positive, if not necessarily benevolent, one. The former description might owe something to Samoan traditions where a similar being is described as a male ruler of Pulo-tu. According to Herda, such similarities are a reflection of the shared history and genealogical connections between Samoa and Tonga. Borrowings between these islands' traditions were not uncommon and might explain Hikule'o's masculine gender shift in Tongan myth.

Kieran Schmidt looks at dialectic between chiefs, priests and the supernatural in traditional Samoa. The history of Samoa is multi-layered, with each *'aiga*, village and district having its own version and understanding of the past. This past is expressed through oratory, poetry, honorific addresses and genealogies. That the versions often are competing or seemingly contradictory reflects the political realities of Samoa's past. In these competing versions mythology links with the origins of political titles as well as with the afterlife to provide a rich tapestry of Samoan oral tradition. Schmidt discusses the sacredness as well as political expediency of the *papa* and *ao* titles. He also links these to the ceremonial honorific *tafa'ifa*. As the titles are understood to be the 'gifts of the gods', he highlights the role of the priest in these important genealogical and chiefly systems.

The life and times of the Raiatean priest Tupa'ia is the subject of Hank Driessen's essay. Members of the Cook expedition met the then exiled Tupa'ia in Tahiti in 1769. It was Cook's first voyage into the Pacific and the 45-year-old Tupa'ia became one of the expedition's main informants, esteemed for his knowledge. He is often remembered for his map and list of islands known to the Society Islanders, which is frequently cited as evidence of the extent

and nature of pre-contact Polynesian geographical knowledge. Driessen points out, however, that before his exile from Raiatea, Tupa'ia, a high-ranking priest, had had considerable status and influence. Driessen unravels the intricate sociopolitical and genealogical context surrounding Tupa'ia and comments on the historical drama that unfolded in the islands. Tupa'ia left the Society Islands with Cook, acting as interpreter and informant until his untimely death in Batavia (now Jakarta). In his sketch, Driessen reminds us that Tupa'ia's encounters with the West were not the most significant in his life.

Andrew Hamilton's essay recounts the traditional religion of *fa'a Samoa* and the Samoan reception of Catholicism in 1845. Samoa had by then accepted the Protestant *lotu taiti* of the London Missionary Society as well as the *lotu tonga* of the Methodists. The first French Marists and their Samoan converts were received and protected by dissident chiefs who supported this *lotu pope* as part of the wider game of 'chiefly power politics'. Hamilton locates historically the religion of the first Catholic missionaries and their Samoan chiefly supporters. Both had experienced within living memory the revolutionary changes wrought by various external and social forces on their societies. Hamilton suggests that, for Samoans at least, changing religions was not only a strategy by which to gain the support of the evidently 'powerful and beneficent deities' of the strangers, but an attempt 'to change the spiritual and cosmic order to suit the new circumstances'; something the traditional and devalued religion could not. Hamilton believes that, in their encounters with Samoa, the Catholic missionaries revealed some appreciation of *fa'a Samoa*. As members of a hierarchical church, they felt more comfortable in a ranked society and did not condemn tattooing, though they remained strict on marriage and divorce. In matters of theology, too, the early Marists, defining religion according to Saint Paul as 'belief in the existence and justice of God', could acknowledge that Samoans shared with

others of the human race an ability to discern God 'by natural reason'.

Michael Reilly's essay on Mangaia interprets a dream narrative experienced by the island's ranking high priest (*ariki*) about the reception of the London Missionary Society. First summarising the narrative, Reilly reflects on the resistance of 'Western rationalistic thought' to interpreting dreams as historical documents and its preference for treating them as subjects for psychoanalysis; a complex not shared by Polynesian societies. He then proceeds to explain the dream references to people and places using the historical and ethnographical record for Mangaia and other Polynesian islands. The reception of the Polynesian missionaries Davida and Tiare was organised by the chiefs and priests who managed their incorporation into Mangaian society. The dream narratives that foretold their coming are themselves part of a large body of Mangaian prophecies about a new order. Predictions of the arrival of strangers, particularly Europeans, occur in a number of Polynesian islands. The early church on Mangaia continued to interpret the significance of the new religion's arrival using traditional references, especially those invoking the human sacrifice associated with the inauguration of the pre-Christian high chiefly ruler, the *mangaia*. The theme of transformation established in Numangatini's dreams, Reilly concludes, can be seen as 'part of a network of traditional references that continued to be adapted and developed by the early church, including its resident European missionary'. In reflecting on the place of the dream narratives amongst the wider body of Mangaia's historical discourse Reilly shows his debt to Niel Gunson's writings on shamanism in the Pacific. Attention is drawn to the role of the *atua*, Tangaraoa, located among the distant *tuarangi* (spiritual beings) at the horizon, and the shamanistic references found in the dream and elsewhere in Mangaia's traditional practices, its religion and its narratives. Similar references are noted for other Cook Islands, including the story of

Nuinui of Manihiki. Reilly concludes that the interpretation of Numangatini's dream narrative emphasises the importance of distinguishing and understanding an 'Islander perspective' of Mangaia's transition to Christianity; a transformation 'ever voiced in the symbolic language of Mangaia's previous religion'.

While the essays by Herda, Schmidt, Driessen, Hamilton and Reilly explore the indigenous deities of Oceania and the new visions of the Christian God at the moment of its reception in the islands, the next essays narrate the period of consolidation and growth of these missions during the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. The stories of the individual missions highlight the ways that divine vision was worked out in the practical politics of individual missionaries, always informed by particular theological understandings, historical circumstances, ethnocentric presumptions, and the responses of the local people. Pacific Islanders had at times to realise the foibles of the foreign god's agents while the latter had, in the longer term, to accept the process of indigenisation, which, if slowed by the actions of certain churches and missionaries, could not be halted. In the long run, the visions of the Christian Jehovah as well as the philosophies of such faiths as the Bahá'í have become as much a part of Pacific Islands society as the many earlier spiritual beings they encountered and often merged with.

Andrew Thornley focuses on Fijian Methodism during its period of growth between 1850 and 1880, choosing to explore certain less well known issues of 'decision-making and control, involving European missionaries and indigenous ministers'. Leadership, in particular the debate surrounding whether indigenous Fijian church ministers could assume important 'decision-making positions', reveals the nature of 'the relationship between Islander and non-Islander' during this 'culture contact' period. European missionaries, with some notable exceptions, were not convinced that Fijians were capable of assuming positions of equality and responsibility commensurate with their European colleagues. They

were still, it was claimed, 'in a *transition* state'. What external church pressure was exerted seemed more concerned to support the indigenous Fijian ministers because they cost far less than their European counterparts (£5 as opposed to £160). During the 1870s, after the division of the Fijian Church in 1873, there seemed the promise of an increasing Fijian autonomy within the church. In fact, as Thornley shows, the European Methodist ministers, in their effort to sustain their own authority, went so far as to break with Methodist traditions and have only certain Fijian ministers represent others at church meetings. The inferior position of the indigenous clergy was demonstrated in that most sacred of Western commodities, the salary: whereas Europeans received a raise from £160 to £200, a Fijian probationer received the sum of £5 and a senior minister just £20. Commenting on the 1878 constitution, which enshrined the idea of Fijian representation, Thornley comments that it was 'intended as a temporary expedient'. 'But how long,' he asks, 'was "temporary"?' Influenced by Social Darwinism, the European missionaries put off indefinitely the day when Fijian ministers would 'assume full responsibilities'. The 'temporary expedient' itself continued until well into the 20th century, with a 'missionary-dominated church' persisting in its 'blurred vision' as if viewing events 'through a glass darkly'.

A similar conservatism is found by Ross Mackay in the Methodist Mission to Papua. On their arrival in 1891, the mission's 'religious idea' was to transform Melanesian culture 'through the introduction of Christian presence and teaching'. It was, according to the missionaries themselves, an attempt to redeem, not to abolish. Ironically, the increasing conservatism of the missionaries, especially their district chairmen, led to a church unable to make any meaningful internal changes until the 1960s. Just as the European Methodists in Fiji broke with their own traditions in order to keep Fijians in a subordinate role, so the Papua Methodist chairmen transformed themselves into prelates more powerful than

any established church hierarchy. Such missionaries could not be persuaded to see male Papuans as anything more than simple tradesmen and certainly not as church leaders. As the Papuans remained lowly, humbled beings, so the district chairmen became more autocratic, domineering and bullying. One of them, noted as possessing considerable charm and linguistic ability, would wash his hands and launder any items of clothing touched by Papuans. Such a mind-set meant that even as late as 1957 only six Papuan ministers had been appointed. The disdain for Melanesians was extended to the many Pacific Island missionaries who served in the mission from its outset in 1891 until 1980. During World War II, when white missionaries were temporarily evacuated, it was the Pacific Islanders who continued to sustain the church at the village level. Despite their long years of service, no Pacific Islander was ever given the same responsibility as their European colleagues and none were permitted to be in authority over the latter. The colour of the skin in such missions became an index to a person's abilities.

Diane Langmore's biographical essay on Constance (Paul) Fairhall, who served with the London Missionary Society in Papua New Guinea, provides a contrasting view of a missionary's life and work. While Fairhall arrived as a nurse 'under the panoply of a confident British imperialism', her mission work was premised on the notion of service rather than an older mission ambition to save souls. Much of her time was spent working in mission hospitals, where she quickly realised that she could not assert 'a sergeant-major manner' but rather had to work in a joking and gentle manner alongside Papuans. This approach was exemplified by the title of Fairhall's book, *Where Two Tides Meet*, in which she described her Papuan work as a meeting of a 'tide of suffering and superstition' and a tide of 'healing and love'. According to Langmore, such a metaphor also applies to Fairhall's own life, encompassing as it did 'the meeting of the tides of early 20th-century evangelicalism and theological modernism, of Edwardian

imperialism and late 20th-century post-colonialism'. Long before it became fashionable, Fairhall realised that European colonial dominance had to give way to Papuan self-determination. Her last decade of service reflected her beliefs as she lived and worked as a Welfare Officer in a Port Moresby suburb of newly urbanised Papuan New Guineans. Langmore emphasises how radical this move was at a time in the 1960s when such towns remained ethnically segregated. Fairhall retired from Papua New Guinea in 1970 believing that 'foreigners should "progressively hand over responsibility to [Papuan New Guineans] and stand by them as they make their own mistakes and learn their own lessons"'.

David Hilliard looks at the Anglican Melanesian Mission's idea of God and the religious ideas they conveyed to Melanesians. The martyred Bishop Patteson had become increasingly interested in 'the question of accommodation'; in other words, the accommodation of Christian doctrines and practices to another culture formed in a very different social environment. Subsequently, key theological ideas disseminated to the Melanesian Mission confirmed Patteson's views; in particular, a 'liberal Catholicism', which believed 'that Christianity was the final and universal religion, incorporating all elements of truth which other religions had partially anticipated. God was revealed to some degree in all religious systems, and each race had a unique contribution to make to the universal church.' The eminent missionary and ethnographer R. H. Codrington was even prepared to expand the definition of what religion was so as to include 'any belief in beings who are invoked by prayer and who can be approached by some ritual of communication'. In his view, it was important for any missionary to look about and find amongst the most 'wild and foul superstitions' 'what is true and good'; to find 'the common foundation' on which 'the superstructure of the Gospel' could be built. Such charity and open-mindedness was exemplified by another notable member of the Melanesian Mission, Charles Eliot Fox, who, more than anyone

else, in Hilliard's view, 'transcended his culture and came to see the Christian God through Melanesian eyes'. Missionaries such as Fox, with their moderate '*via media*' Anglicanism, taught Melanesians of a Christian God who fulfilled rather than denied 'existing Melanesian beliefs'. In that sense, as Hilliard points out, these Anglicans 'pioneered the integration of Christianity with Melanesian culture'.

David Wetherall compares two Anglican missionary dioceses, that of British New Guinea (Papua) and Carpentaria in Australia's far north, both established at the end of the 19th century.¹⁰ The bishops and their English staff had much in common with the Melanesian Mission. Both dioceses drew their staff from among the English country clergy and, like the mission, showed, in Wetherall's words, a 'spirit of reverent agnosticism towards Melanesian culture'. One of the litigants in the 1992 Mabo case before the Australian High Court was an Anglican priest from the Carpentaria diocese who was descended from the last cult priest on Murray Island. His statements revealed his understanding of a continuity between the two religions, with the traditional religion of his ancestors having been fulfilled by the arrival of Christianity. In this he echoed, according to Wetherall, the views of those Anglo-Catholic pioneers who, as with the Melanesian Mission, 'respected the traditions of Melanesian villagers because they revered their own'.

If both dioceses drew from the same Anglican Anglo-Catholic wellspring, there were differences caused by the particular histories and circumstances of their respective dioceses. Papua began as a mission of white clergy among a pagan Melanesian population, while Carpentaria was established to service a growing white goldmining population in a field formerly controlled by the London Missionary Society, whose Pacific Islander staff had worked for many years in the Torres Strait area. The long-term progress of both dioceses also took different paths. Carpentaria

worked closely with the Queensland State Government in fields such as education, though becoming increasingly critical during the 1960s of the treatment of Aborigines. It became a leading campaigner for the rights of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. At the same time, by transferring its missions to the Queensland Government, the diocese forced the State to assume final responsibility for the treatment of Aborigines. As such responsibilities were shed and the white population diminished, the diocese lost its importance and was eventually absorbed into the Diocese of North Queensland in 1996. By contrast, Papua remained aloof from the colonial government and its non-conformist neighbours. From the 1960s, as it became clear that Papua New Guinea would become independent, the New Guinea diocese began a process of indigenisation, splitting into five dioceses, appointing indigenous bishops and itself becoming independent of the Australian Anglican Church.

The next two essays in this collection draw these particular studies out into the broader Pacific context. Norman Douglas explores the 19th century forays into Polynesia by the American Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), beginning in the Society Islands in 1844. According to Douglas, these missions to Polynesia were characterised by a 'fortuitous quality' and an uncertainty about the focus of their work; with some favouring white colonial populations such as New Zealand's. These early efforts stand in contrast with the successful LDS activities in the Pacific in more recent times. In the decades after their first Society Island mission, there were few signs of that later enterprise in Polynesia. There was, for instance, no stress on the 'special place' that Polynesians were to later occupy in Mormon theological thinking. Nor does Douglas detect much stress in this early period on the LDS's distinctive teaching, such as the living prophet or an 'American-based sacred text'. Instead, there was a stress on biblical sources.

Among other early efforts, there was an LDS mission among the Hawaiians on the island of Maui. After its missionaries were

recalled to Utah in 1858, ‘upstarts’ emerged, such as Walter Murray Gibson, who came to Hawai‘i as a Pacific missionary with the blessing of the LDS leader, Brigham Young. Douglas describes Gibson as displaying ‘a flair for labour organisation characteristic of a Southern planter and a talent for simony reminiscent of a medieval pope, occasionally using Hawaiians as plough-horses and selling church offices’. Though excommunicated by the LDS in 1864, he managed to retain the land title to the Mormon’s property in Lanai’s Palawai Valley. Gibson’s actions did at least prompt the church to return and re-establish itself at Laie in Oahu. While Gibson’s followers attempted to establish themselves in Samoa, their visits were not followed up in any organised way until further American LDS missionaries arrived there in 1888. On their return to Tahiti in 1892, the reorganised American missionary effort encountered remnant dissenting LDS churches with whom, for many years, they maintained an uneasy relationship. Douglas concludes that the LDS mission in the Pacific, especially Polynesia, was ‘sporadic’ and even ‘accidental’, with many islands being ignored for several decades after the first mission forays in islands such as Tahiti. The evidence for their early activities stands in contrast with the LDS claims for universality and ‘the often repeated claim that the Polynesians were an especially favoured people in the LDS scheme of things’. In fact, Douglas concludes, the Pacific and especially the Polynesians were ‘peripheral’ to the 19th-century mission work of the LDS.

The penultimate essay concerns the postwar establishment of the Bahá’í in the Pacific, a faith which, as Hassall observes, shares certain of its ‘motivations’ with the Christian religion but originates outside the Western tradition. Hassall explains important Bahá’í principles, noting the attractiveness of its messages for Pacific Islanders, such as the ‘oneness of humanity’ and the acceptance of the ‘possibility of the divine origins of primal religions, and of other beliefs based on “custom”’. In that emphasis on respect and the

acceptance of other belief systems, the Bahá'í faith aligns itself with the moderation of the Melanesian Mission and other *via media* Anglican churches in the Pacific. The first Bahá'í 'pioneers' were untrained and self-sufficient, often middle-class and retired individuals who worked discretely with local communities, seeking to avoid conflicts with the colonial establishment, itself often comically ignorant of the nature of the Bahá'í faith. The first Local Spiritual Assembly (the basic Bahá'í administrative unit) was established in the Pacific in 1950. A Regional Assembly for the Pacific Islands was established in 1959. The first Pacific Island converts in the 1950s were attracted especially by the Bahá'í emphasis on social development and equality. In developing these structures, the Bahá'í did not stress the physical buildings and land of earlier mission churches but the sharing of principles with the local people and the development of local Bahá'í communities. Thus physical structures, such as schools, were built by these indigenous groups rather than imposed on them by an external source. In the adaptations of Bahá'í in the Pacific, the early 'pioneers', not possessing a profound knowledge of local cultures, left it up to the Islanders themselves to make what 'modifications' to their customs they saw fit. Thus the Bahá'í Pacific communities were able to indigenise their institutions quickly. Their most significant contribution, in Hassall's view, is that they 'constitute a strong moral force, capable of forming partnerships with other progressive Pacific communities that aspire to the preparation of these island nations for the challenges of the coming Pacific century'. In that aspiration, the Bahá'í reflect Fairhall's concern to support the growth of the local people in the rapidly changing context of a post-colonial Pacific world.

In the final essay of the volume, Kambati Uriam outlines the nature of theological practice and education in the Pacific. He is concerned with the basis of the theology brought to the region by Christian missions and catalogues the shifts within it from the

early to late 20th century. It is his contention that much of the early mission education and activity was directed towards physically establishing churches and theological colleges and in training priests, pastors and Christian leaders. After World War II, Uriam argues that a shift towards the establishment of a professional and relevant Christian ministry in the Pacific occurred. Uriam argues that the worldwide Christian ecumenical movement was vital to the establishment of an indigenously relevant theology for Pacific Islanders. He also considers the early Christian conferences in Madras, India, and Morpeth, Australia, and discusses their significance on the nascent Pacific theology. Later conferences in Tonga and at Malau Theological College are also recounted in terms of the impact they had on theological thinking and activity emerging in the region.

Any collection of essays on the religious history of so large a region as the Pacific cannot hope to be comprehensive; rather, the intention has been to sketch the religions of at least some of the islands, the local reception of Christianity and other faiths, and their varying processes of indigenisation. The diversity of the local spiritual beings was matched by the differences among the religions that colonised the Pacific in the modern period. In the humid heat of the islands, some missionaries acquired a blurred vision that permitted a violence to be done to their own beliefs and practices, and towards the people among whom they worked. Others experienced a meeting of tides and stood by the indigenous people and their churches. For others again, there was a mutual recognition of the values of each other's religion that enabled the beliefs and practices of the one to merge with and to fulfill the other. The reciprocal recognition that occurred at times at an individual and a theological level ultimately permitted a coming together in partnership for many missionaries and the indigenous people of the Pacific, even in those missions scarred by earlier Eurocentric prejudice. In that sense, the religions of the Pacific

Islands have been able to sustain a guiding vision of authenticity and truthfulness in the ways their beliefs and practices have found expression in the daily lives of their worshippers.

Footnotes

- 1 Donald Denoon with Steward Firth, Jocelyn Linnekin, Malama Meleisea and Karen Nero (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 431–2.
- 2 Sir James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion*, one vol., abridged edition (New York, 1922), p. 57.
- 3 See *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 2nd ed., 1991), p. 1552; Raymond Firth, *Rank and Religion in Tikopia: A Study in Polynesian Paganism and Conversion to Christianity* (London, 1970), p. 17; Jabez Bryce, 'Foreword', in Emiliana Afeaki, Ron Crocombe and John McClaren (eds), *Religious Cooperation in the Pacific Islands* (Suva, 1983), p. viii.
- 4 This summary is drawn particularly from Firth, *Rank and Religion*, p. 18; also Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp. 57–8; *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*; Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 5–7.
- 5 *Religious Cooperation in the Pacific Islands*, p. ii.
- 6 Niel Gunson, 'An Introduction to Pacific History', in Brij V. Lal (ed.), *Pacific Islands History: Journeys and Transformations* (Canberra, 1992), p. 6.
- 7 Gunson, 'An Introduction', pp. 4–5.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 9 Niel Gunson, *Messengers of Grace* (Melbourne, 1978).
- 10 A version of this paper was published as David Wetherall, 'The Anglicans in New Guinea and the Torres Strait Islands', *Pacific Studies*, 21: 4 (1998), pp. 1–31.

Narratives of Gender and Pre-eminence

The Hikule‘o Myths of Tonga

Phyllis Herda

While gender has been well represented in recent studies of Tongan society,¹ little critical attention has been employed to examine how gender articulates with hierarchy in the oral traditions of this western Polynesian archipelago. This paucity is to be lamented, for mythology and oral tradition recount much about the spiritual beliefs of the society that created them. Understanding the significance and sacred potency of an individual myth or the corpus of oral tradition and how this relates to visions of divine or spiritual beings is paramount to appreciating gender in traditional Tongan society and how it transformed through time. Myth does not seek to merely reproduce what is experienced in reality; it expresses central themes that are culturally valued and, as such, it can provide insight into the structures of Tongan society, which are meaningful for the historical interpretation of events. However, care must be taken in assigning distinction and significance within the traditions.

This chapter addresses issues of gender specificity within Tongan oral tradition; in particular, it focuses on Havea Hikule‘o, one of the origin deities (*ngaahi ‘otua tupu‘a*). As creators of the

world and the universe, the *ngaahi 'otua tupu'a* are vital and consequential to the relation and appreciation of these traditions. Within the corpus of sources of Tongan mythology, Havea Hikule'ō is accorded a pre-eminent position. Hikule'ō has been described as 'the god of spirits', 'one of the original gods of the Fahi Tonga' and 'an original god, the master of Pulotu and the patron of the sacred Tu'i Tonga' (the traditional sacred ruler of Tonga).²

Of those scholars who consider gender within Tongan oral tradition, it is the sex of Hikule'ō that is most often (if not the only gendered particularity) debated. This is because the sex of Hikule'ō is not consonant throughout Tongan oral tradition. In some traditions, Hikule'ō is female; in others, male. Several scholars have made much of this supposed 'bisexuality' or 'indetermination' of the deity's sex. This paper examines the rendering of the sex of Hikule'ō in Tongan mythological narratives and considers the apparent overall gender inconsistency of Hikule'ō in Tongan oral tradition.

Havea Hikule'ō is found in two distinct depictions within the corpus of written sources of Tongan oral tradition. Tongans make a distinction between 'stories' (*fananga*), 'historical tales' (*talanoa*) and 'ancient traditions', 'accounts of the gods' or mythology (*talatupu'a*).³ Depictions of Havea Hikule'ō all fall into this latter category of *talatupu'a*. The first and perhaps the best accredited of the narratives associated with Hikule'ō is the deity's representation in the creation myth.

Tongan Creation Myth

There is more than one creation myth in Tongan oral tradition. These variants are not perceived as contradicting or negating one another; rather, they are understood as coexisting accounts of the origin of the Tongan universe.⁴ Hikule'ō is well known within Tongan creation mythology:

Hikuleo ... like Tangaloa was viewed as a kind of universal god who was alike [sic] everywhere all things being known to him, but still not much troubled himself with the common affairs of men below.⁵

While the author of this passage, the 19th-century Wesleyan missionary John Thomas, clearly designates Havea Hikule'ō as a male god, not all renditions of the Tongan *talatapu'a* do: 'Tradition is not quite certain as to whether Hikuleo were a god or goddess, but the general suffrage seems in favour of the female sex.'⁶ Contemporary Tongans point to the carved ivory and wood figurines, clearly female, which were made in pre-Christian Tonga as images of Hikule'ō and often link these figures to the creation myth.⁷ In most versions of Tongan traditions, Hikule'ō, male or female, is born of the incestuous union of Taufulifonua and Havealolofonua, who were the children of the incestuous union of Piki and Kele, the eldest pair of twins in the primary creation genealogy:

Long ago seaweed and mud sticking together were floating about in the sea, and at last drifted ashore on the island of Totai in Bulotu [sic] [Paradise]. The seaweed and mud thereafter separated, and there grew up between them the ... rock called Touiafutuna. After a time the rock was agitated by a great trembling, and there was a roaring as of thunder; then it split asunder, and there leapt forth a pair of twins, male and female, named respectively Biki [sic] and Kele. Again the strange disturbance, heralding the birth of another pair of twins, male and female, Atungaki and Maimoa-a-longona. Twice [again] were these commotions repeated, followed in each instance by the birth of a pair of twins, male and female, the third pair being named Fonu-uta [Land turtle] and Fonu-vai [Sea turtle], and the fourth pair Hemoana [The Sea Wanderer, viz. The Sea Snake], and Lube [sic] [Dove]. In [the] course of time the twins grew up, and mated, each within itself. To Biki and Kele were born two children, a boy Taufuli-

fonua, and a girl Havea-lolo-fonua. To Atungaki and Maimoa-a-longona was born a daughter Vele-lahi; and to Fonu-uta and Fonu-vai a daughter named Vele-jii. Biki and Kele then made a new country, called Tonga-mamao [Distant Tonga], to which they took Taufuli-fonua, and Havea-lolo-fonua, who lived there for a time in perfect innocence. At last they mated, and of their union was born Hikuleo. Havea-lola-fonua then went and induced her cousins Vele-lahi and Vele-jii to come also and mate with her brother. Of Vele-lahi were born the Tangaloas [five deities] ... Of Vele-jii were the Mauis [deities].⁸

The deeds and actions of Hikule'o in the ensuing sections of the *talatupu'a* are not as numerous as those of Hikule'o's younger siblings, the Tangaloa/s and Maui/s⁹, who, between them, are credited with the formation of the Tongan islands. While Hikule'o's accomplishments are not as active as his/her siblings, Hikule'o's presence in the *talatupu'a* is important and his/her genealogical positioning is significant. Indeed, the inactivity of Hikule'o combined with the genealogical arrangement suggests, in Tongan terms, a relationship of inequality and hierarchy — pervasive themes in Tongan mythology and life.

Tongan society was and is pervasively concerned with inequality and hierarchy; it is highly stratified.¹⁰ Rank is fixed at the moment of birth by the chronicle of one's genealogical background and between two individuals is expressed as 'high' (*'eiki*) and 'low' (*tu'a*). *'Eiki* and *tu'a* are also the words used to designate 'chief' and 'commoner' in Tongan and, clearly, the same principles of hierarchy apply. Within the traditional family/political grouping (*kainga*), sex and age determine rank. Sisters outranked all brothers and elder outranked younger; so, an eldest sister outranked all her siblings. She was 'high' (*'eiki*) to them. Rank, then, within Tongan familial groupings, was inherently gendered.

Throughout the myth Hikule'o is associated with divinity and high rank or in Tongan terms being *'eiki*. It is Hikule'o who

occupies the most senior status of his/her mythical generation (Hikule‘o, Tangaloa/s and Maui/s). Hikule‘o is the firstborn child of Havealolofonua, the highest ranking of Taufulifonua’s wives. It is noteworthy that it is Havealolofonua, Taufulifonua’s principal wife (*ma‘itaki* or *moheofa*) who seeks out Velelahi and Velesi‘i as *fokonofa*, or secondary wives. It is the relationship between the women that is significant in establishing the rank of chiefly wives and their children. The very existence of the secondary wives and their offspring is contingent on the action of the principal wife. In Western terms, the three are ‘cousins’, but in Tongan reckoning, Havealolofonua, Velelahi and Velesi‘i are sisters, as their parents are siblings. Havealolofonua is *ta‘okete*, or elder sister, to Velelahi and Velesi‘i and, consequently, outranks them. Her child will also be privileged by hierarchy and her higher rank and will outrank the children of Velelahi and Velesi‘i. In addition, Havealolofonua is the full sister of Taufulifonua.

Hikule‘o’s position in the creation myth accords well with that of the eldest sister in Tongan society, where she is accorded the greatest respect (*faka‘apa‘apa*) while her brother or brothers hold political authority (*pule*). It is no coincidence that it is Hikule‘o’s younger brothers (Tangaloa and Maui) who are employed with the creation of the mundane physical world (*ngaue*) while Hikule‘o, in the pre-eminent sibling position, has no task or *ngaue* to accomplish. Like a chief within Tongan society or a sister within a Tongan family, she just ‘is’, and so brings honour and divinity to her sibling set. In the myth, Havea Hikule‘o is accorded the greatest respect for just being.

Hikule‘o remains spouseless and childless throughout the episodes of the creation myth, in direct opposition to her brothers, whose progeny are all male and who all lead active physical lives. The similarity between the mythic configuration of Hikule‘o and that of the early Tu‘i Tonga Fefine, who was the eldest sister of the Tu‘i Tonga, or ruler of Tonga, is striking. In early Tonga, before the

time of Tu'i Tonga Fefine Sinaitakala-'i-langileka, the Tu'i Tonga Fefine was said to remain spouseless and, apparently, childless because there was no Tongan male of high enough rank to marry her. The highest-ranking Tongan male was, of course, her brother, the Tu'i Tonga. He, alone, possessed sufficient, albeit lower, rank to marry and reproduce with his sister — as happened in the *talatupu'a* between Havealolofonua and Taufuilifonua. However, unlike the *ngaahi 'otua tupu'a* (origin deities) or the high-ranking chiefs of Hawai'i, sibling incest was not a socially acceptable option, even for the highest ranking of Tongan aristocrats. Early Tu'i Tonga Fefine, therefore, remained, like Hikule'o, spouseless and childless.¹¹ This is in marked contrast with the preceding generations where full sibling incest and incest between identical twins is enacted. Full sibling incest is a marker of divine creation in Tongan mythology. A case of individuals of the same chiefly essence uniting — of like reproducing like and chiefly being enhanced.¹²

The kinship configuration of the *ngaahi 'otua tupu'a* (origin deities) is also significant when considering the relationship between Hikule'o and holders of the Tu'i Tonga title. Once a year, the Tu'i Tonga received an offering of chiefly yams (*kahokaho*) from the Tonga populace on behalf of Hikule'o:

the Inaji [sic] was a Tongan ceremony, annually observed to the gods of Tonga or to Hikule'o consisting of young yams offered.¹³

to present ... the first fruits, or the first young yams, to the God Hikuleo at his house at Olotele [at Mu'a on Tongatapu], as an acknowledgment of their dependence upon him and the gods, as the owners of the earth, the sea and all things, and to unite to supplicate the gods, to bless the seeds now about to be put into the ground, and to send them suitable weather of rain and sun, that the yam seeds may bring forth a crop, and that thus labouring may not be in vain.¹⁴

The *'inasi* directly demonstrated the political efficacy of the Tu'i Tonga title as well as honouring and validating the religious efficacy of Hikule'ō. In reality, they were one and the same. The *'inasi* also acknowledged the kinship link between the Tu'i Tonga and Hikule'ō. Tangaloa, the younger brother of Hikule'ō, had a son, Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a, who had a son with an earthly woman from Tonga. This son was 'Aho'eitu, the first to hold the Tu'i Tonga title:¹⁵

There was a large toa [*Causarina*] tree on the island of Tu'ungakava in the lagoon of Tongatapu. The tree was so large that it reached high up into the sky [*langi*], the domain of the kau Tangaloa. Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a was in the habit of climbing down the toa to the earth below. One day he saw a woman whose name was 'Ilaheva, also called Va'epopua. She was so beautiful that 'Eitumatupu'a slept with her. He, then, returned to the sky, but would often descend the tree to visit 'Ilaheva Va'epopua. She soon became pregnant and gave birth to a boy. The woman tended the child on earth, while the god remained in the sky.

After some time, 'Eitumatupu'a returned to earth and asked, "Ilaheva, what is the child?" 'Ilaheva replied, "The child is a man!" To which 'Eitumatupu'a responded, "His name will be 'Aho'eitu." 'Eitumatupu'a then asked, "Ilaheva, what is your soil like?" 'Ilaheva answered, "Sandy." 'Eitumatupu'a then dropped some soil down from the sky and returned to the sky, while 'Ilaheva and 'Aho'eitu lived on earth at Popua near Ma'ofanga.

After some time, 'Aho'eitu desired to see his father. He asked his mother about him and was told that he was a god of the sky. 'Ilaheva rubbed 'Aho'eitu with fine coconut oil, gave him a new *ngatu* [clothing] and instructed him to climb the *toa* tree, where he would find his father, Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a.

'Aho'eitu climbed the tree and found a path leading across the sky. He followed the path and soon came across

‘Eitumatupu‘a snaring pigeons. Upon the arrival of ‘Aho‘eitu, ‘Eitumatupu‘a sensed his divinity and sat down, unaware that this was his own son. ‘Aho‘eitu asked ‘Eitumatupu‘a to stand and told him who he was and why he had come. When ‘Aho‘eitu spoke, ‘Eitumatupu‘a embraced him. Overcome with the realisation that this beautiful man was his son, ‘Eitumatupu‘a cried.

‘Eitumatupu‘a had other sons, by divine mothers, who were involved in a festival [*katoanga*] that day. ‘Eitumatupu‘a sent ‘Aho‘eitu to meet them at the mala‘e [open grassy area] where they were playing *sika‘ulutoa* [a dart game reserved for chiefs]. All those present were astounded by the beauty of ‘Aho‘eitu and the skill he displayed playing *sika‘ulutoa*. Some surmised that he was the earthly son of ‘Eitumatupu‘a. When ‘Aho‘eitu’s elder, celestial brothers learned of his true identity, they immediately became jealous of him. They seized him and ate ‘Aho‘eitu, except for his head which was thrown into a *hoi* vine [*Dioscorea sativa*] which has since been poisonous.

After some time, ‘Eitumatupu‘a sent a woman to fetch ‘Aho‘eitu. She could not find him anywhere and returned to ‘Eitumatupu‘a and reported her news. ‘Eitumatupu‘a immediately suspected that ‘Aho‘eitu’s brothers had killed and eaten him and he called them before him. They denied knowing the whereabouts of ‘Aho‘eitu, but ‘Eitumatupu‘a insisted that they vomit into a large wooden bowl [*kumete*] which had been brought. The bowl was soon filled with the remains of ‘Aho‘eitu. His head was retrieved from the *hoi* vine and the bones were also placed in the bowl. Water was poured over its contents, and then leaves from the *nonu* tree [*Nonufiafia, eugenia malaccensis*] known for their medicinal purposes were placed on top. The elder brothers of ‘Aho‘eitu were ordered to remain with the bowl throughout the night. When the next day dawned, ‘Aho‘eitu sat up, alive, in the bowl. ‘Aho‘eitu’s brothers reported the news to ‘Eitumatupu‘a who gave the following

orders: 'Aho'eitu was to return to earth and become the first Tu'i Tonga [ruler of Tonga], while his five elder brothers were to accompany him and, for their crime, they and their descendants were to serve him.

James has argued that the influence of the sister or father's sister (*mehakitanga*) of Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a extends to this portion of the *talatupu'a*, which deals with the creation of the Tu'i Tonga title through the death and rebirth of 'Aho'eitu.¹⁶ She asserts that it is through the regenerative power of the sister or *mehakitanga* that 'Aho'eitu is 'born again' as the Tu'i Tonga. James makes this connection by asserting that the *kumete* (kava bowl) which 'Eitumatupu'a forces 'Aho'eitu's celestial half-brothers to vomit into is, metaphorically, the womb of one of these women.¹⁷

While the suggestion is provocative, it needs to be pointed out that this is not a Tongan explanation of 'Aho'eitu's rebirth and the creation of the Tu'i Tonga title nor is it implied within the myth. Of the *ngaahi 'otua tupu'a*, it is Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a whose agency is significant to the transformation. He is the father of 'Aho'eitu and the *fakafotu* (brother's child) of Hikule'o. He is the one 'Aho'eitu seeks out, he is the one who acknowledges 'Aho'eitu as his son and he is the one who orchestrates 'Aho'eitu's rebirth as Tu'i Tonga. In Tongan terms, this is how it should be as titles, at least theoretically, are passed from father to son. Therefore, it is proper that a father be involved in the regeneration of his son as a sacred and, more significantly, a titled being. While Hikule'o is significant to the Tu'i Tonga, it is as *mehakitanga* and is most evident in the *'inasi* ceremony, not as creator of the Tu'i Tonga title.

Hikule'o stands as father's sister (*mehakitanga*) to Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a. In Tonga, the position of *mehakitanga* demands an inordinate amount of respect (*faka'apa'apa*) and duty (*fatongia*) on the part of the *fakafotu* (brother's child) as it combines the basic elements of Tongan rank: gender and seniority. This relationship was enhanced through succeeding generations and, consequently,

Hikule‘o stands as *mehekitanga* to ‘Aho‘eitu and all subsequent Tu‘i Tonga. The presentation of the ‘*inasi* to Hikule‘o by an incumbent Tu‘i Tonga can thus be understood as the *fatongia* of a *fakafotu* to his *mehekitanga*. Presentations to one’s father’s sister (*mehekitanga*), especially of valued items such as *koloa* (wealth: fine mats or barkcloth) or chiefly yams are a proper recognition of the inherent hierarchy of the relationship — the *mehekitanga* (father’s sister) is ‘*eiki* or ‘high’ to a brother and his children. An annual presentation of chiefly yams (*kahokaho*) from a Tu‘i Tonga to Hikule‘o would acknowledge and nurture his link to his *mehekitanga*.¹⁸ While this facet of the myth is significant in an understanding of the ideology of Tongan religion and chieftainship, it is implied in the narrative. The explicit themes expressed concern the right to rule and how sibling and parental relationships influence this right.

The ‘Aho‘eitu episode of the *talatupu‘a* focuses on the importance of the genealogical lineage in establishing political rule as well as sibling relations between brothers through thematic exegeses of seniority and usurpation. The notion of the firstborn as a sacred category was valued in Tonga, as it was throughout Polynesia, and it was asserted that the right to rule was inherited through male primogeniture. It is the father and politically active titleholder who passes down to his son the right to rule through the title. Usually this goes to the most senior, in terms of rank, of the sons. Senior rank can mean eldest in age, but, significantly, it usually, first, plays in favour of the rank of the mother. Polygamy was the common practice of male chiefs in pre-Christian Tonga and his children by his highest-ranking wife ranked most senior, regardless of their age.

However, in the ‘Aho‘eitu myth, ‘Aho‘eitu is neither the son of the highest-ranking wife (the mothers of ‘Eitumatupu‘a’s other sons are divine, while his mother is human) nor is he the eldest of the sons; yet, he is appointed as ruler. Bott has suggested that ‘Eitumatupu‘a’s choice of ruler emphasised the importance in

Tongan politics of the support of the mother's people, in addition to rank, in effective governing.¹⁹ 'Aho'eitu was chosen as the ruler of Tonga because his mother was from Tonga and he could expect the political and economic support of her people. While the importance of the mother's people's support in establishing effective rule is, unquestionably, one implied thematic dimension of the episode, the primary configuration is of sibling rivalry and usurpation of rank — a theme common to all of Polynesia.²⁰

In the narrative, 'Aho'eitu's success over his celestial half-brothers is due to his innate superiority over them. 'Eitumatupu'a recognised this transcendence even before he knew the identity of 'Aho'eitu by sitting in his presence, thus acknowledging that 'Aho'eitu was superior to him. This recognition of supremacy is further highlighted by 'Aho'eitu eating in the presence of his father — an act that signifies that 'Aho'eitu was not considered inferior to 'Eitumatupu'a. His superiority was also expressed by his remarkable beauty and his unmatched skill at the game of *sika'ulutoa*. Outstanding ability or great beauty were considered marks of sacredness in old Tonga. Sahlins observes that in Hawai'i specifically, and throughout Oceanic societies, 'beauty ... institutes a relation of attraction and coherence that is not only centered or hierarchical, but makes the *subordination of those who behold it an act of love*'.²¹ The innate superiority of 'Aho'eitu is confirmed by his father naming him as ruler. This initiates a charter for the possibility of junior succession outside the usual ranking structures. This mythic statement of junior succession does not represent a true political usurpation in the sense of assuming power by force or without right, although junior succession in the real world might include both. Instead, it acknowledges possible variables that might supersede seniority of rank as a legitimating force in the choice of political succession. As Bott points out, the importance of local maternal lineage support in effective political rule is a factor in this case, as are 'Aho'eitu's personal attributes.

Significantly in the Tongan *talatupu'a*, the sibling rivalry occurs between half-brothers who share a father, but have different mothers. This relationship is known as *uho tau* in Tonga and is traditionally regarded as an antagonistic relationship as the siblings compete for the title of the father.²² *Uho tau* translates as 'fighting umbilical cords' — a vivid metaphor reflecting the likelihood of dissension between the siblings. The reverse of the relationship, where siblings have the same mother but different fathers, is known as *uho taha* ('one umbilical cord') and is characterised by a supportive sibling relationship. That 'Aho'eitu's cannibalistic killers should be his *uho tau* is logical in the myth given the tenets of the Tongan social order.

Elizabeth Bott and Valerio Valeri read the myth of 'Aho'eitu as one underwritten with oedipal themes, as 'Aho'eitu is perceived as the recipient of the jealousies of his father, 'Eitumatupu'a, as well as his half-fraternal siblings.²³ While the importance of the father-son relationship in the myth is undeniable, it is debatable whether it represents a mythical rendering of the Oedipus complex as it is through the intervention of his father that 'Aho'eitu is reconstituted, acknowledged and given his title.²⁴ Certainly, the half-sibling relationship is the more significant one conveyed in the narrative, with the mother-son relationship also clearly identified and important. All of the stated relationships are relevant to the underlying thematic plot of what constitutes legitimacy in establishing political rule.

The Myths of Pulotu

The second category of mythological depiction of Hikule'o is in *talatupu'a* concerned with Pulotu — the afterworld of the gods, and the 'eiki (chiefly) and *matapule* (chiefly attendants) over which Hikule'o is said to rule. Pulotu is often described as an underworld or as an island said to be to the Northwest of Tonga.²⁵ Members of the Cook expedition were told in the 1770s that:

Immediately on death that [the soul] of their chiefs separates from the body and goes to a place calls 'Boolootoo [Pulotu], the chief or god of which is Gooleho [Hikule'ō].²⁶

And a London Missionary Society missionary recorded two decades later that:

They supposed that their souls immediately after the death of the body, were swiftly conveyed away to a far distant island, called Doobludah [Pulotu] ... of the god Fliggolayo/ Higgolayo [Hikule'ō].²⁷

Humans and spirits were said to reach this world by jumping into a crevice or into the sea: 'The path to Pulotu is between Eua and Kalau islands and a great rock known as Makaooa [Makatuua] stands there.'²⁸ It was only the chiefly who journeyed to Pulotu; common people (*tu'a*) were said to simply re-enter the soil from whence they came.²⁹

The Pulotu myths are divisible into two categories. In the first, Pulotu is described as an underworld, distinct from Lolofonua, the underworld ruled by Maui. It is a frightening place often described as containing piles of human bones or walls of human eyes. In these myths, Hikule'ō is depicted as a malevolent being:

when [the] body died it ... went at once to Pulotu. When they got there, Hikuleo [the ruler of Pulotu] chose some [individuals] as posts for his fence, and some as supports for the log on which tapa is made, and some were taken as posts for the gate.³⁰

he was an angry god whom they called heccolea [Hikule'ō].³¹

In another myth, Hikule'ō is portrayed as a particularly unpleasant character who instructs human visitors to Pulotu that unless they can gather and consume food at a supernatural rate, they will be

killed.³² Another depicts Hikule'ō as a cannibal carving children alive for food.³³ In these myths of an abhorrent Pulutu, Hikule'ō is reputed to be the origin of many, if not most, of the darker aspects of society and the natural universe. These include war, famine and death.³⁴ Other malevolent accounts of Pulutu are associated with *nifoloa* or cannibalistic demons, not identified by name, who appear in human form.³⁵

In the second type of mythological depiction of Pulutu, the afterworld is presented as a paradise, with its ruler, Hikule'ō, portrayed as a positive, although not necessarily benevolent, being. According to Will Mariner, a young British man who was shipwrecked in Tonga at the beginning of the 19th century, Pulutu was:

Well stocked with all kinds of useful and ornamental plants, always in a state of high perfection, and always bearing the richest fruits and the most beautiful flowers ... The whole atmosphere is filled with the most delightful fragrance that imagination can conceive. The island is well stocked with beautiful birds of all imaginable kinds, as well as with an abundance of hogs.³⁶

Anderson, a member of Cook's third 1777 visit, was told that:

They feign that this country was never seen by any person, is to the westward beyond Feejee [sic] ... and that there they live for ever.³⁷

In this idyllic Pulutu, Hikule'ō was said to be the guardian of Pukolea (the speaking tree) and Akautalanoa (the talking tree), which were reputed to be able to offer unlimited wishes and favours to those individuals fortunate enough to be able to ask.³⁸ This benevolent Pulutu was also said to house Vaiola, 'the water of life'; it was

A fountain ... and the nature of this water is healing. If a sick person washes in it, he comes up healed. If a leper bathes in it he will be clean; if an old man, he becomes

young, the blind see, those afflicted with elephantiasis become well, the deaf hear, the dumb speak. People afflicted with any sickness need only plunge into the water to become well.³⁹

Hikule'ō appears as benign in this more munificent depiction of Pulotu, welcoming human visitors and occasionally restoring life to the dead.⁴⁰

The Sexual Ambiguity of Hikule'ō

Although many, if not most, scholars of Tonga mention the sexual ambiguity of Hikule'ō in Tongan mythology, few attach significance to the ambiguity or critically assess gender assignation or mutability within the corpus of traditions. Mahina and Perera, while asserting that Hikule'ō is female, neither explain nor analyse the application. James, while resting her analysis on a female sexual identity for Hikule'ō, does not critically assess the assignation or the sexual mutability of Tongan traditions.⁴¹ Gifford was, perhaps, the first to address the possibility of a bisexual Hikule'ō, stating that, in the early 1920s, 'some informants made the deity masculine, others feminine. It is not improbable that ... Hikuleo [sic] was bisexual'.⁴² Gunson, like Gifford, allows for the possibility of bisexuality, although he concludes that 'in the shaman's world gender was of little importance'.⁴³ Valeri contends that the bisexuality of Hikule'ō asserts that 'she is beyond sex, and thus also beyond sexuality'.⁴⁴

It is Douaire-Marsaudon who identifies and analytically tackles the significance of the sex of Hikule'ō. She states that Hikule'ō is 'represented as a terrifying divinity, sometimes a woman, sometimes a man, or a woman with male attributes'.⁴⁵ Further in her argument, she supplements this point by making the claim that Hikule'ō is bisexual and that this should be interpreted as a symbolic representation of the fundamental nature in Tongan society of the brother-sister or father-father's sister relationship. She further contends that 'it was the whole humanity who was

threatened by Hikule'ó ... because of his bisexuality'.⁴⁶

Gifford's, Gunson's, Valeri's and Douaire-Marsaudon's ambiguous use of the term 'bisexual' is somewhat misleading and needs clarification. They could not have intended that Hikule'ó was sexually active with both males and females, for the myths of Hikule'ó make no mention of sexual or procreative activity for the god/goddess. This is hardly surprising, for pre-Christian Tongan ideology did not tend to assign significance, positive or negative, to heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual activity. Similarly, Valeri's contention that Hikule'ó was 'beyond sex, and thus also beyond sexuality' or that a non-sexual identity suggests a symbolic political usurpation flies in the face of Tongan notions of sexuality as well as appropriate sexual behaviour and partners for the highest-ranking Tongan women.⁴⁷ As previously mentioned, the sister of the Tu'i Tonga, who held the title of Tu'i Tonga Fefine, was deemed of too high a rank to marry any Tongan and was said to remain spouseless and, apparently, childless because there was no Tongan male of high enough rank to marry her.⁴⁸ Whether she was sexually active or celibate is not mentioned. Sexuality is important to Western constructions of femininity and is often absent from Western constructions of power and status; in Tonga, it is irrelevant to both. However, what is clear is that Havea Hikule'ó's rank and authoritative efficacy was not effaced by sexual behaviour, marriage or procreative status. Due to his analytic preoccupation with sexuality and sexual behaviour, Valeri misses the similarity (and the significance) between the non-marriage of Hikule'ó and the early Tu'i Tonga Fefines.

Similarly, the bisexual designation of Hikule'ó sharing masculine and feminine characteristics is not tenable. In considering the entire corpus of Tongan traditions, each narrative rendering is gender specific. The significance of this is overlooked by scholars who favour one or another sex designation or a very few who contend a bisexual signification for the deity. The sex of Hikule'ó is clearly specified and consistent within each rendering. It neither shifts in any one account nor is any significance attached to

the sexual inconsistency in the corpus of the myths. It is also notable that Tongans do not find the lack of gender consonant in any way unusual or problematic.

While I agree, in general, with Douaire-Marsaudon's designation of the centrality of the brother-sister relationship in Tonga — in myth and society — her designation of Hikule'ō as both brother and sister, and father and father's sister signalled by a 'dangerous bisexuality' seems misguided in Tongan terms. Firstly, bisexuality, which was not mentioned or in any way alluded to in the *talatupu'a*, is not demonstrably a 'dangerous' relationship in pre-Christian Tonga. However, sibling incest, which Douaire-Marsaudon configures, perhaps unknowingly, in her argument is — even at the highest chiefly level. This prohibition was strictly enforced, with male siblings of any family grouping moving out of the immediate domestic arrangement when his sister reached puberty. While sibling incest does occur in the *talatupu'a*, it is in the generations preceding Hikule'ō. Significantly, it ends before there is divine contact with humans. As previously argued, Hikule'ō sits structurally in the myth as the higher ranking elder sister of named half-brothers (Tangaloa and Maui), not as an implied combined brother/sister figure in one deity by the relationships of Tangaloa Eitumatupu'a and 'Aho'eitu and Hikule'ō and 'Aho'eitu.

Savea Si'uleo

An individual named Savea Si'uleo appears in Samoan mythology with a striking similarity to the Tongan Pulutu myths featuring Havea Hikule'ō. Unlike Hikule'ō, Savea Si'uleo was not usually portrayed as a principal god or *atua* in Samoan mythology; instead, he is considered as an *atiu*, born of a menstrual blood clot (*alualutoto*) as are most *atiu*, and with fraternal cannibalistic tendencies.⁴⁹ Si'uleo is presented in the corpus of Samoan oral traditions always as male, often as an eel and as the ruler of Pulutu:

It is here [Falealupo] that the souls of the departed enter Puluotu, the underworld. There are really two holes, one for the chiefs, the other for the commoners ... the ruler of Puluotu was the god Savea Si'uleo, a terrible atiu, or demon, from whom the Tonumaipeas claimed descent.⁵⁰

Tuipulotu Savea Siuleo [sic], who in the form of a conger eel, a *pusi*, visits the land where he is pursued by the octopus.⁵¹

Si'uleo is also named as the father of Nafanua a female deity who in conjunction with Savea-se'u-leo [sic] may be considered the national gods of war.⁵²

Despite the predominant appearance of Savea Si'uleo in the Puluotu myths in Samoan oral tradition, there is one account of Savea Si'uleo in the Samoan creation myth.⁵³ As in the Tongan creation myth, primordial sources account for the birth and no gender specification is given:

It is related there that the red earth united with the brown earth and begot the rock that stands upright, and that it [Papatu] united with the earth rock [Papa'ele]. From this union there issued the white rock called Papatea, this is also the name of the home of the spirits in the distant east. From this rock and the grotto [Papaana] then sprang song [Lagi], melody [Fati], the Stink [Elo] and fresh breeze [Taufaile matagi]. This last coming from the east now united with the lake Alao and the two demons, Saolevao and Saveasi'uleo were born.⁵⁴

Unlike Hikule'o, however, Savea Si'uleo does not appear to play a role in the ordering of the primary gods or the universe in Samoa, a direct role in the origin of the world or universe, nor in kingship and political rule — aside from being the father of Nafanua, whose descendants, through Salamasina, ruled Samoa from the 16th century.⁵⁵

It is clear that the Samoan rendering of Savea Si'uleo is remarkably similar to the Tongan myths of Havea Hikule'ō which depict the deity as a cruel, unpleasant character who inhabits a fierce and often monstrous Puluṭu. A partial Tongan adoption from Samoan mythology of a male Hikule'ō should not be readily discounted. Borrowing from Samoan mythology might also be seen in the phallic symbolisation in references to Hikule'ō as an eel, sea snake or as having a tail — occasional in the corpus of Tongan mythology, frequent in Samoan.⁵⁶

It is hardly surprising that Samoa and Tonga share similarities in their oral traditions as the two archipelagoes have a shared history and genealogical connections that were, for a time, formalised at the high chiefly level.⁵⁷ In fact, all of western Polynesia can be described as having a shared cultural base, with the notion of Puluṭu 'as definitely western Polynesian as the concept of Hawaiki as underworld or ancestral home is central-marginal [Polynesia]'.⁵⁸

Borrowings between Tongan and Samoan oral traditions are not uncommon. In the case of Savea Si'uleo and Havea Hikule'ō there appears to have been a gender transformation that was not quite complete. In Samoan mythology, Savea Si'uleo is always male and is best known for his association with the afterworld. Havea Hikule'ō is associated with Tongan myths of Puluṭu and is best known in the Tongan creation myth. While designated as either male or female in Tongan mythology, Hikule'ō structurally occupies the place of eldest sister in the *tala tupu'a* — the best-known of the Hikule'ō narratives. It might be an outside, Samoan influence, not a significant or indeterminate gender specificity in Tongan oral tradition, which accounts for Hikule'ō's male appearance in some of the Puluṭu myths.

Footnotes

- 1 See, for example, Garth Rogers, "'The Father's Sister is Black': A Consideration of Female Rank and Power in Tonga", *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 86: 2 (1977), pp. 157–82; Phyllis Herda, 'Gender, Rank and Power in 18th Century Tonga: The Case of Tupoumohefo', *Journal of Pacific History*, 22: 4 (1987), pp. 195–208; Christine Gailey, *Kinship to Kingship: Gender Hierarchy and State Formation in the Tongan Islands* (Austin, 1987); Kerry James, "'Rank Overrides Everything": Hierarchy, Social Stratification and Gender in Tonga', in Judith Huntsman (ed.), *Tonga and Samoa: Images of Gender and Polity* (Christchurch, 1995), pp. 59–81; Francoise Douaire-Marsaudon, 'Neither Black nor White: The Father's Sister in Tonga', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 105: 2 (1996), p. 157–82.
- 2 Reverend R. B. Lyth, 'Tongan and Feejeean Reminiscences', 2 volumes, Mitchell Library B549 (Sydney), p. 7.
- 3 E. E. V. Collocott, *Poems and Tales of Tonga* (Honolulu, 1928), p. 5; Edward Winslow Gifford, *Tongan Society* (Honolulu, 1929), p. 318; and Sione Latukefu, personal communication, 1986.
- 4 The Honourable Ve'ehala, personal communication, 1985. For various versions of the Tongan creation mythology, see John Martin, *An Account of the Tonga Islands ... Volume One* (Edinburgh, 1827), pp. 228–29; John Thomas, 'History of Tonga', MS Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (London, 1879) pp. 126–39; *Koe Makasini a Kolisi*, 4 (1881–83), pp. 22–6, 51–5, 74–8; Pedro Novo y Colson, *Alrededor del Mundo por las Corbetas 'Descubierta' y 'Atrevida' ...* (Madrid, 1885), pp. 380–1; *Koe Fafangu*, 4 (1906), pp. 122–7; P. F. Reiter, 'Traditions Tonguiennes: Del'origine des Diables ou Diuex, De l'origine de Monde, De la Constitution d'Eua', *Anthropos*, 2 (1907), pp. 230–40, 438–48, 743–54; J. D. Whitcombe, 'Notes on Tongan Religion', TS, Pacific and History, The Australian National University, (1925), pp. 1–3; E.E.V. Collocott, 'A Tongan Theogony', *Folklore*, 30 (1919), pp. 234–8; Edward Winslow Gifford, *Tongan Myths and Tales* (Honolulu, 1924), pp. 14–29; Noel Rutherford (ed.), *Friendly Islands: A History of Tonga* (Melbourne, 1977), pp. 1–2; Elizabeth Bott, *Tongan Society at the Time of Captain Cook's Visits: Discussions with Her Majesty Queen Salote of Tonga* (Wellington, 1982), pp. 89–91; 'Okustino Mahina, 'The Tongan Traditional History Tala-e-fonua: A Vernacular Ecology-Centred Historical Cultural Concept', PhD, The Australian National University, 1992, pp. 59–60. The account presented here represents a compilation of these narratives.
- 5 John Thomas, 'The History of the Friendly Islands', Mitchell Library (Sydney, 1961), 1879, pp. 34.
- 6 J. D. Whitcombe, 'Notes on Tongan Religion', p. 1; see also Gifford, *Tongan Society*, pp. 291–2; David V. Burley, 'Hikule'o and the Temple of Faleme'e:

- Archaeological and Narrative Contexts of a Pre-Christian God House in the Kingdom of Tonga', unpublished paper; Mahina, *The Tongan*, pp. 60, 82–4.
- 7 Elizabeth Spillius (Bott), 'Discussions of Tongan Custom, 1958–1959, with Her Majesty Queen Salote Tupou, The Honourable Ve'ehala', MS, Palace Records Office, Nuku'alofa, 1958–59; the Honourable Ve'ehala, personal communication, 1985; Fuli Pereira, Auckland Museum, personal communication, 1995.
 - 8 E. E. V. Collocott, 'Tongan Myths and Legends, III', *Folk-Lore*, 35 (1924), pp. 275–6.
 - 9 Most versions of the creation myth have a singular, elder generation of Tangaloa 'Eiki and Maui Motu'a who are the fathers of the next generation of multiple Tangaloas and Mauis. The principles outlined here remain the same in either rendering.
 - 10 Complex notions of Tongan rank and how it changed through history are simplified here. For a fuller discussion of Tongan rank and society, see Gifford, *Tongan Society*; Adrienne Kaeppler, 'Rank in Tonga', *Ethnology*, 10: 2 (1971), pp. 174–93; Elizabeth Bott, 'Power and Rank in the Kingdom of Tonga', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 90: 1 (1981), pp. 7–81; Phyllis Herda, 'The Transformation of the Traditional Tongan Polity: A Genealogical Consideration of Tonga's Past', PhD, The Australian National University, 1988.
 - 11 One account lists the descendants of Hikule'o as Loau (Gifford, *Tongan Myths*, p. 19).
 - 12 See Alan Howard, 'History, Myth and Polynesian Chieftainship: The Case of Rotuman Kings', in Antony Hooper and Judith Huntsman (eds), *Transformations of Polynesian Culture* (Auckland, 1985), p. 50; Herda, 'The Transformation of Traditional Tongan Polity', p. 23.
 - 13 John Thomas, 'History of Tonga', MS, Nan Kivel Collection, National Library of Australia, Canberra, n.d., p. 10.
 - 14 John Thomas, 'Mythology of the Tongans', MS, Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, London, n. d., p. 12.
 - 15 See references and explanation in footnote 4.
 - 16 K. E. James, 'The Female Presence in Heavenly Places: Myth and Sovereignty in Tonga', *Oceania*, 61, 4 (1991).
 - 17 James, personal communication, January 1988; James, 'The Female Presence', p. 345.
 - 18 Phyllis Herda and Wendy Cowling, 'Pulotu Revisited: Considerations on the Gender of Hikule'o', conference paper, Sixth Tongan History Association Conference, 1993, Nuku'alofa.
 - 19 Bott, *Tongan Society*, p. 91.
 - 20 See, for example, Katherine Luomala, *Maui-of-a-Thousand-Tricks* (Honolulu, 1949), p. 114; Irving Goldman, 'Status Rivalry and Cultural Evolution in Polynesia', *American Anthropologist*, 58 (1955), pp. 680–97; and Patrick V.

- Kirch, *The Evolution of the Polynesian Chiefdoms* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984), p. 197.
- 21 Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago, 1985), p. 17, emphasis in the original.
 - 22 See Rogers, 'The Father's Sister', pp. 171–73.
 - 23 Elizabeth Bott, 'Psychoanalysis and Ceremony', in J. S. La Fontaine (ed.), *The Interpretation of Ritual* (London, 1972), pp. 229–31; Valerio Valeri, 'Death in Heaven: Myths and Rites of Kinship in Tongan Kingship', *History and Anthropology*, 4 (1989), pp. 218–20; Valerio Valeri, 'On Female Presences and Absences in Heavenly Places', *Oceania*, 65: 1 (1994), pp. 75–92.
 - 24 See James, 'The Female Presence'.
 - 25 Gifford, *Tongan Myths*, p. 153; Paul Geraghty, 'Proto Central Pacific, Puluotu and the Polynesian Homeland', conference paper, 'Linking Our Sea of Islands', University of Auckland, Auckland, 1995.
 - 26 J. C. Beaglehole (ed.), *The Journals of Captain Cook on his Voyages of Discovery*, III: 2 (Cambridge, 1967), p. 949.
 - 27 Reverend James Orange, *Life of the late George Vason of Nottingham* (London, 1840), pp. 157, 235 errata.
 - 28 Gifford, *Tongan Myths*, p. 19.
 - 29 Thomas, 'History of Tonga'.
 - 30 Gifford, *Tongan Society*, p. 328.
 - 31 Walter Lawry, TS, Mitchell Library, Sydney, CYPOS Reel 123, 1823, p. 78.
 - 32 Collocott, *Poems and Tales*, p. 18.
 - 33 Gifford, *Tongan Myths*, p. 192.
 - 34 See Lawry, TS, p. 278; Reiter, 'Traditions Tonguiennes', p. 235; Collocott, *Poems and Tales*, p. 16; Gifford, *Tongan Society*, p. 328.
 - 35 Collocott, *Poems and Tales*, pp. 14–5.
 - 36 Martin, *An Account of the Tonga Islands*, p. 102.
 - 37 Beaglehole, *The Journals of Captain Cook*, p. 949.
 - 38 Gifford, *Tongan Myths*, p. 192.
 - 39 Gifford, *Tongan Society*, p. 292.
 - 40 Gifford, *Tongan Myths*, pp. 153, 183.
 - 41 Valeri, 'Death in Heaven'; James, 'The Female Presence'.
 - 42 Gifford, *Tongan Society*, p. 291.
 - 43 Niel Gunson, 'Tongan Historiography: Shamanic Views of Time and History', in Phyllis Herda, Jennifer Terrell and Niel Gunson (eds), *Tongan Culture and History* (Canberra, 1990), p. 17.
 - 44 Valeri, 'On Female Presences', p. 87.
 - 45 Douaire-Marsaudon, 'Neither Black nor White', p. 156.
 - 46 *Ibid.*, p. 158.

- 47 Valerio Valeri, 'On Female Presences', p. 81.
- 48 The eventual inclusion of the foreign Fale Fisi ('House of Fiji') as an appropriate lineage of marriage partners for the Tu'i Tonga Fefine structurally 'solved' this problem.
- 49 John B. Stair, *Old Samoa or Flotsam and Jetsam from the Pacific Ocean* (St Paul's Churchyard, 1897), p. 215; Augustin Kramer, 'The Samoan Islands', 1: 1, TS, English translation, Turnbull Library, Wellington, pp. 39, 53, 187–9; Augustin, Kramer, *Salamasina: Scenes from Ancient Samoan Culture and History* (Pago Pago, 1958), p. 14; C. Stuebel, *Myths and Legends of Samoa: Tala o le Vavau* (Wellington, 1976), 38–9.
- 50 Kramer, *Salamasina*, p. 14.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Stair, *Old Samoa*, p. 220.
- 53 Kramer, *The Samoan Islands*, p. 39.
- 54 Stair, *Old Samoa*, p. 221.
- 55 Penelope Schoeffel, 'Rank, Gender and Politics in Ancient Samoa: The Genealogy of Salamasina', *Journal of Pacific History*, 22: 4 (1987), pp. 174–94.
- 56 Collocott, 'Tongan Myths', p. 276; Gifford, *Tongan Society*, p. 291.
- 57 See Huntsman (ed.), *Tonga and Samoa*.
- 58 Edwin G. Burrows, 'Western Polynesia: A Study of Cultural Differentiation', *Ethnologiska Studier*, 7 (1926), p. 76; Geraghty, 'Proto Central Pacific'.

The Gift of the Gods

The Sacred Chief, Priest and Supernatural Symbols in Traditional Samoa

Kieran Schmidt

The history of Samoa is regional. Samoan history is multi-layered with diverse and competing claims of families, villages and districts, each with its own understandings of the Samoan past. Samoa is concerned with history and the past is brought into the present through oratory, poetry, honorific addresses and genealogies. There is a saying in Samoa, ‘*O Samoa o le i’a e ivi ‘ivia*’, meaning that ‘Samoa is like a fish with many bones’. This poetical saying implies that, in genealogical terms, all are related. It is often quoted when members of many families are assembled. It is a warning not to speak of genealogical issues and histories as well as a form of apology in that what one says is subject to the limitations of the speaker and that speaker’s inherent bias towards his own family and perception of history.

There are many chiefly or *matai* titles in Samoa. The most celebrated are the great district titles known as the *ao* and *papa* titles. These titles originate in encounters between deities and humans and involve exchanges and *mana* challenges. The major focus of this chapter will be on the Tagaloa title. The following

discussion is based on early ethnographic records of Samoan stories or *tala*, songs and genealogies as well as more recent interviews from research in Samoa. It also is based on the *fa'alupega*, which celebrate the history and achievements of *matai* titleholders in each village. In the cry of welcome and order of presentation of the kava cup, the orators recall in potted form past marriages, rewards from deeds and bravery, and gifts from gods to their human successors, especially in the case of those titles that are known as *ao* or *papa* — the great district titles in Samoa.

According to a popular oral tradition the political ordering of Samoa came about due to the wanderings of Pili and the subsequent appointments of his sons. Pili is said to have been the son of the great god Tagaloalagi and a descendant of the Manu'a line. The stress is on Manu'a and Upolu in these accounts of origin as Pili moved from Manu'a across to Tutuila, Upolu and finally to Savai'i. Also, three of his children — Ana, Saga and Tua — are said to have established the three main districts of Upolu, namely, A'ana, Tuamasaga and Atua respectively. When it comes to Savai'i, however, it is often said that Pili's youngest child, a daughter named Tolufale, ordered Savai'i, Manono and Apolima. In this tradition the majority of stories narrate that Pili visited and stayed in A'opo, a village situated well inland on the north coast of Savai'i not far from Safune. In the *fa'alupega* there is still a Pilia'opo today. In Savai'i-based accounts it appears that neither Pili nor his descendants politically ordered the island. The sons of Lealali were responsible.

Atiogie's son was Lealali, who produced a number of male children — all named Tupa'i. Laufafaetoga of Tonga married twice. She married Tupa'i, the grandson of Lealali. She also married Lautala, sometimes termed the Tuifiti or King of Fiji. Thus, early origins unite Tonga (Laufafetoga), Fiji (Lautala) and Samoa (Tupa'i) as originary human ancestors. The children of Laufafaetoga's marriage with the Fijian Lautala produced the children Ututauofiti, Tauaofiti and two

daughters, Lega and Fotu. The names of these children act as metonyms, as they are said to have established the village of Matautu, and the districts of Sataua, Salega and Safotu respectively. The children that resulted from Laufafetoga's union with Tupa'i were two sons, Funefeai and Lafai. They became the holders of two great titles because of their interaction with deities: Funefeai received the Tagaloa title from Tagaloalagi and one of the descendants of Lafai received the Tonumaipe'a title with the assistance of the *aitu* or deity Nafanua and Saveasi'uleo, her father — the 'King of Puluotu'. Tagaloalagagi — the great god of the heavens — and Nafanua are the most celebrated national deities of Samoa.

Fune is also known as Funefeai. Turner and Krämer say that he got this name from his habit of biting his nails before going into battle.¹ It is more likely, however, that Fune got his name from the habit of cutting a little finger off before going to war. Funefeai or 'Fune the Fierce' is thus in oral tradition placed against his brother Lafai, who is also represented as being fierce and fearsome. Most commentators refer to Lafai as '*Tama o le po*' or 'child of darkness', which is normally indicative of illegitimacy.² Fune is said to have been the first holder of the Tagaloa title and this is said to have been the gift of the god Tagaloalagi. It is possible that Fune received this title from Tagaloa A'opo, who was to fight against his brother's grandson, although it seems most likely that this Tagaloa is either the Tuimanu'a or someone related to him. It is also important to note that the two brothers, Fune and Lafai, are separated by a great distance and, in agreement with Bülow, these two brothers represent groups of people rather than mere individuals — especially when these two brothers' children are said to have established most of the villages in Savai'i.

The beginning of the Tagaloa title, like that of the other great *ao* title of Savai'i, Tonumaipe'a, is explained in terms of mythological events. In both cases the origin of the title is linked to

a spiritual justification of the title's emergence. It is sanctified by supernatural events and sanctioned by the gods. In the case of the Tagaloa title, Tagaloalagi himself is said to have come to Earth to visit Funefeai because he wished to take Sina — Fune's love interest — for himself. The following version is from Augustin Krämer:

Lafaisaotele married Sinafagaava of Falelima who gave birth to the girl Sinaalaua. Funefe'ai lay with Sinaalaua, and when Tagaloalagi, the god of heaven saw her, he greatly desired her. He therefore spoke to him: Funefe'ai, give me the girl to wife; in return I will give you my name Tagaloa as a title for you. Besides, I will give you eight men to sit at your two sides [*tafa'i*], the 'taulauniu mai le lagi', the 'protecting coconut fronds from heaven', namely Sae and Fataloto of Vaiafai, Tugaga and Tagaloataoa of Safunetaoa, Gale and Tuiasau of Vaisala, Mata'afa and Taliva'a of Sili [Tufu].

Funefe'ai agreed and the four places henceforth called themselves Safune, 'Fune's family'.³

The most extensive explanation comes from Werner von Bülow. He spent most of his time in Samoa living in the village of Safune — the village of Fune and the Tagaloa title. It is also the most graphic in its description. His account of the title's origin is quite similar to his fellow ethnographer but notes that Tagaloa came down from heaven with only two orators, Tagaloataoa and Tugaga. Tagaloa arrived at a most auspicious moment — as Sina was kneeling before Fune. Another major difference with the former account is that Tagaloalagi not only gave him the *ao* title, Tagaloa, but he gave him his water-holders, 'two coconuts tied together [*taulua*]' as well as the two orators. He stresses again that 'the attribute of Tagaloa of Safune is one of two empty coconut water holders tied together, out of which water is taken in order to sprinkle him ... somewhat like holy water'.⁴

There are other aspects of the story that will be discussed presently, but the story revolves around three principal exchanges.

Funefé'ai gives up his wife to Tagaloalagi. In return, he receives the *taulauniu* to serve him and the two coconut water-holders. The story is very much tied to the sacredness of the title and associated sacred symbolism of the coconut.

The term *launiu* refers to the coconut palm or leaf. The coconut leaf represents, in Samoa, life, elevation of status and death. The coconut represents the source of physical and spiritual wellbeing. According to tradition, the first coconut palm sprang from the head of Sina, the first woman. From the head, which is the place of the soul, the birth of the coconut is a sign of fertility and nourishment. The coconut frond is waved on the newly elected high chief. This is done by the *taulauniu*.

When a Tu'imanu'a was inaugurated, he sat in front of the centremost post above which the *afifi* had been fastened — the *afifi* refers to the tip of the coconut frond, which is normally called *i'u o le launiu*. *I'u* also has a figurative meaning, namely the phallus. The entitling of the Tu'imania is like a birth and represents that the new titleholder is a rebirth of the old. It also means that he is the symbol of fertility and sanctity. Krämer does not make this connection, but does say that 'if the *afifi* is placed over the same centre of someone's house it signified that the Tu'imania desired the maiden of the house, a command which must be obeyed'.⁵ Krämer calls this practice 'tu o le afifi o le Tu'imania'.⁶ Again, Krämer does not see the semantic significance of the phrase as *tu* means 'erect' and the erect phallus is figuratively referred to as *ua tu le i'u*. The term appears in other expressions ensuring fertility and good harvest. One example is that the decorative phrase for raising the rod in bonito fishing is called *fa'atu le launiu*.⁷ The verbal form *fa'atu* indicates the raising of the rod. It also refers to an erect coconut frond, symbolically linking the fertility of the land to human fertility.

Samoaan decorative language and illusions make a veiled reference to the Tu'imania's sanctity and fertility by representing

him as an erect coconut palm. The Tu‘imania, like the Tagaloa, represents the godhead. The coconut fronds are waved on him. In Safune, the *taulauniu* do the same. The new titleholder is a potent representative of the godhead.

Female fertility is also spoken of in figurative terms in association with the coconut. In the *solo* of Sina, she bemoans the trade winds that caused much destruction. She sings: ‘I brought forth the coconut palm. Pray that it bears fruit. May it bear fruit not only once. May it bear fruit like a *titi*.’⁸ The *titi* refers to the loincloth. Both a fertile land and a fertile womb are the essence of Sina’s song. Even today, a polite way of wishing a woman to be capable of bearing many children is to say that one hopes that the coconut harvest produces a ripe harvest.

The coconut leaves also represent continued fertility into the afterlife. Krämer recounts the story of Mata‘ulufotu, who was killed by his mother. She decapitated him but he continued to speak as she carried him around in a coconut-leaf basket. This head was an embodied *aitu*, meaning the spirit or soul of her son. This *aitu* went into the ninefold heaven where he found the soul of Sina, a daughter of the Tui’fiti. Mata‘ulufotu seized it and Sina came back to life.⁹ In another account, Lauti, the adopted daughter of Sina, ‘crept in during the night and caught the soul of Sina. She gave it to her parents and they were very pleased when she brought the coconut leaf sheath in which Sina’s soul was wrapped.’¹⁰ The symbolism of the coconut leaf, together with the return to life and the dwelling place of the spirit, appears to be very important in Samoan belief.

In Samoa today, the practices of the ancients regarding death are remembered. The mourning party carries with it the tips of coconut leaves to mourn the dead. The reason for doing this is the belief in the continuation of the *agaga* or spirit’s existence in the material world and the mirror world, Pulu’otu. Alongside this runs the belief that the dead can come back to life as though they never

died. Every district in Samoa dates the rationale for the carrying of coconut leaves back to certain historico-mythic events. These events reveal clearly the belief in the continued existence of life, either in a spiritual dimension as an *aitu* or as the resuscitation of a human being. The mourning practices of the Malietoa family villages like Faleata in Tuamasaga give as the basis of their practice of carrying coconut leaves, *launuu*, the following explanation: Poluleuigana was the son of Ulufamuatele, the son of a Tuitoga and the brother of Alainuanua, the wife of Malietoa Faiga. He was then adopted by Malietoa Faiga and became his son. Malietoa Faiga, often described as part-human and part-divine, lived off human flesh. Poluleuigana, in an attempt to show his dislike of this practice, wrapped himself in coconut leaves. When his father opened them up and found his son, he could no longer practice cannibalism.¹¹ In this sense, Polu was saved by the wrath and awesome sacred power of Malietoa Faiga. The tips of the coconut leaves symbolised this story and the leaves are carried as a sign of respect for the dead. It acknowledges the possibility of coming back to life.

On Savai'i, the most common explanation is that the Tuitoga Fakapo'uri was brought back to life through the intervention of the Tuimanu'a. The following explanation from the district of Salega is an example of how the explanations differ slightly from village to village. Tuitoga Fakapouri was the good friend of the Tuimanu'a who lived in Fitiuta, on Ta'u, Manu'a. It was customary for them to visit, due to their friendship. On one visit Tuitoga wanted to see the Tuimanu'a's village to observe what it was like. The Tuimanu'a said, 'Good, I will prepare everything for your visit.' Although Tuimanu'a allowed him to do everything he wanted, he did not allow Tuitoga to bathe in his pool, because this pool was *tapu* to all but Tuimanu'a.

After a month, Tuitoga set sail. Fitiuta was hidden from view and Tuitoga commanded his crew to visit Faitolo, who looked after the *vaisa*, the sacred water or bathing place of Tuimanu'a. Tuitoga

said he wanted to bathe in the pool. Faitolo was surprised at this request and told him there would be much trouble for him if he did so. In spite of this, Tuitoga jumped into the water without fear. Then he got sick and died. The Tongans watched this dreadful event. They responded by smashing their heads with rocks. Faitolo told them to stop this stupidity. Then he witnessed the Tongans laying Tuitoga down on a coconut leaf while they sang ‘Tuitoga, my Lord, Tuitoga, *lo’u ali’i e’*.

When Faitolo heard the singing he went to the Tuimanu’a and told him what had transpired. Tuimanu’a then went to the *vaisa* and asked the Tongans to change their song to ‘Tuimanu’a my Lord, Tuimanu’a *lo’u ali’i e’* and he came to life. Since that time, when a prominent chief dies on Savai’i, it is customary for the mourners to encircle the home of the deceased with the tips of coconut leaves. Their singing invokes the concept of eternal life. ‘Tuimanu’a, my Lord!’¹²

In the Ituotane district of Savai’i, two stories are given. The first is that of the son of Malietoafaiga, as related earlier. The second concerns Tagaloaniu and Tagaloai. Tagaloaniu lived in the forest, while Tagaloai lived in the sea. Tagaloaniu had his house on the top of the sea. Close to his house was a coconut palm. Under this palm was the place that Tagaloaniu normally used as a resting place from his work. When Tagaloaniu died it is said that he went to live in the ninth heaven. Mourning parties today carry their coconut leaves to ensure that the chief is at rest.

Safune is significant because it is different from the majority of villages in the Ituotane, Savai’i. Here all mourners carry the coconut-palm leaves. When mourners arrive they place their leaves over the place where the deceased is laid. The leaves symbolise shelter and protection of the deceased. The rationale for this practice is given in the following story. Tagaloalagi wished Sina, the wife of Funefe’ai, to be his wife. Funefe’ai responded to the request and in return asked for Tagaloalagi to bring him a house. Funefe’ai

announced to Tagaloa that he would cut off his head if his request for the house did not eventuate. The *fale* or house of Tagaloa was decorated completely with coconut leaves. The house was named 'Fale ole Tagaloa' ('House of Tagaloa') and became the central meeting place of the village of Safune. The house of the *ao* (high title) of the Tagaloa was given to Funefe'ai.

There is also an *au-osoga* or special mourning party belonging to the high title of Tagaloa. Not all villages have an *au-osoga*. The role of this distinctive mourning group is to protect the *ao* when death occurs. When a Tagaloa dies they are to ensure that the body cannot be stolen, thereby protecting the *ao* title. Using axes and knives, they lay waste to all the trees in and around the village. This will ensure that there is no suitable hiding place for an enemy. This destruction of everything, including animals, is done to ensure that an enemy cannot hide under any form, flora or fauna.¹³

The justification for razing the village and slaughtering the animals is linked to the spirit's ability to choose and inhabit various shapes. The spirit could enter and take on the form of an animal, enter the village and take over and possess the body of the Tagaloa. The function of the *au-osoga* was to lay waste to all the vegetation and animal life of the village so that there was no possibility that a foreign spirit or *aitu* could possess his body.¹⁴ The common thinking among most European commentators links the razing of the village to respect for the chief. In fact, the Safune orators' account leads one to understand that this ritual action has more to do with protecting the corpse of the chief against being possessed by an enemy spirit.

The symbolism of the coconut palm is linked to death, life, *tapu* and *aitu*. The coconut palm in the *aitu* house called the '*faleoaitu*' in Lepea was made in the form of a basket and the *aitu* was said to have dwelled within this basket. The soul of Sina was captured in a coconut-leaf sheath. Mourners carry coconut leaf tips, which

symbolise new life, and *tapua'i*, which are most often made of coconut leaves, are put on plants to ward off possible offenders. They serve as a physical sign of the *aitu's* presence. Deceased ancestors, *aitu*, can take on physical form but are not themselves material beings. Coconut leaves become a physical representation of the *aitu* and their role in the material world. The coconut, on a natural level, represents the staple diet. It is connected with shelter, furniture and clothing. On a symbolic level, the coconut is connected with spiritual power and the journey into death and beyond.

Krämer does not record the coconut water-holders in his account of the Tagaloa title. He does, however, record a song of the water-holders. In this song he notes that the water-holders were sacred and were used only by the four highest chiefs. The song also recalls that the Samoan custom forbids anyone but that chief to drink from that container. 'There is a great fear for anyone but the chief to drink from the water-holder, as if they did so they would become ill. Even the true children of the chief would not dare drink from it.'¹⁵ The Tuimanu'a also had his water-holders, but as he had no sennit attached for carrying them, 'his Taupou carried it aloft in her hand. She was forbidden to speak when carrying his water.'¹⁶ Krämer adds that 'when the village maiden went to get the cup of the Tu'imania, the kava chewers followed her. When the girl left the house, the kava chewers began to smash boats; to kill chickens', and everything else in their way.¹⁷

Water, as with the coconut, is essential in ensuring physical and spiritual wellbeing. The Tagaloa, like other sacred chiefs, were sprinkled with water. Von Bülow notes that the sprinkling of water 'happens when a village bestows an *ao* title', and existed until the early 1900s when he was writing.¹⁸ He stated that this practice stemmed from the gods and this sprinkling with water made the titleholder holy (*heilig*).

In the first exchange between Tagaloa and Fune that allowed Fune to receive the titles, the woman, Sina, was the cause of the

exchange. Even gods have to pay the price for beauty, and Fune received his *taulauniu* and *taula* as reward. In the von Bülow version, Tagaloalagi entered just as Fune knelt at the feet of the woman (Sina), implying a sexual position. It is also possible to construct this meaning from the original Samoan.¹⁹ The Samoan can be understood in two ways: either Fune was kneeling at the foot of the woman or he was kneeling between the legs of the woman. What is clear is that Tagaloalagi arrives at a crucial time in this relationship.

As a result of Fune's respect and allowing Sina to go to Tagaloalagi, Tagaloalagi told him to come and take his *ao* title (the Tagaloa title). Tagaloa also gave him two hollowed coconut water-holders (*taula*) and two *tulafale*.²⁰ According to most stories pertaining to the origin of the Tagaloa title, Fune receives eight orators not two. In the *fā'alupega*, there are eight *tulafale* or *taulauniu*, who are appointed to sit on the left and right of the Tagaloa in each of the four villages that make up Safune. Krämer criticises Bülow on this point and it does seem unusual that he records the tradition in this way.²¹ The reason that von Bülow says that the two *taulauniu*, Tagaloataoa and Tugaga, were the orators left by Tagaloalagi is because von Bülow's informant was Taulealea from Safune i Taoa. Von Bülow states in the publication only that Taulealea was from Safune. He does not say that the Taulealea title is a title from Safune i Taoa — the same village as that of Tugaga and Tagaloataoa.

Krämer does not inform us who he received his information from in regard to the title. It is common, however, for the informant to favour and emphasise his connections to the detriment of others. Krämer should have understood this as his own monograph favours the emphases of his informants. In all these instances a relative on another side of the family or a family line would emphasise their own importance in the story. It is in this sense that there is no generally accepted national history of Samoa.

There is no doubt that if von Bülow was collecting this story from a group of orators from the other sub-villages of Safune, Taulealea would not have made the claim that the two *taulauniu* were the *taulauniu* of the sub-village Safune i Taoa. Rather, respect would have been shown to the other three sub-villages and they would have been included. The ideal situation is that the conferring of the title is a consultative process involving the *taulauniu* of the four parts of Safune. However, in terms of *Pule* or authority, each will attempt to gain precedence. One of the major difficulties of recorded traditions in Samoa is that very often — as in Turner and Stair — we are not informed who the informants were. Very often also they record a tradition without giving specific names of titleholders or the names of villages. This makes analysis very difficult. Also, by giving only one version, the sense of the nature of historical presentations and internal politics is not revealed. The differences in the versions are what allow an understanding of the nature and forms of historical presentation in terms of Samoan society itself.

A further example of this form of emphasis is revealed in a title case regarding the Tagaloa Taoa title in 1956.²² In this case, the then present titleholder of both the Tugaga and Tagaloa Taoa titles argues for the primacy of these titles in relation to the *ao* title of the Tagaloa. The two original titleholders are said to have been the first to live in the village and the term *Tapunu'u* — meaning literally sacred village or the sacred bond between the original settlers and the land — is applied to them. He also says that there were 10 principal figures in the Government of Tagaloalagi; the eight, which are normally referred to, and two additional *taulauniu*. The added *taulauniu* are those from Tuasivi in Vaimauga and Tapuele'ele. These villages do not belong to the traditional Fale Safune. However, the petitioner in this case argues that they were established at the time Funefe'ai obtained the government from Tagaloalagi. He does say that Tagaloa Funefe'ai moved to settle in

Malaetele in Samaa Fagae'e. Tagaloa Taoa settled in Lealofiotaua, the *mala'e* of troubles.

Over time, the Tugaga title gained in importance to such an extent that Tugaga built up a family of Ta'auso or brother-chiefs. Each of these is said to have been assigned particular appointments such as vanguards in war — kava-chewers of the Tagaloa and other appointments. Obviously in 1956 other titleholders in that village argued against the petitioners. What is important in terms of historical reconstruction is to recognise the tendency of interested parties to predate events and also to realise that there will be differences in the telling of the origin of the titles even within one family.

In another case, in 1923, regarding the Tagaloa title, the *taulauniu* of Vaiafai maintain that they had more exclusive rights over the Tagaloa title in that they were the two *sauali'i tagata* of the Tagaloa and they, together with the orators (*fofoga o fetala'i*), were given the *Pule* over the title by Fune.²³ The term *sauali'i tagata* was translated by the court translator of the time as being the two magicians of the Tagaloa. A more correct rendering would be 'living gods' or 'semi-human and semi-divine beings who were generally able to break *tapu*, including consuming people, without retribution from their relatives'. It is interesting that in the *Tusi Fa'alupega*, published in 1958, these two *taulauniu*, namely Sae and Fataloto, are referred to as *aitu tagata* — with *aitu* being a less formal word for spirit than *sauali'i*.²⁴ The other six *taulauniu* are referred to merely as *taulauniu* and not as *aitu* or *sauali'i tagata*. In the more recent *Tusi Fa'alupega*, Sae and Fataloto are referred to merely as *taulauniu*. The question that then confronts one is whether Sae and Fataloto did have a special relationship to the Tagaloa title in regard to them being semi-divine priests. It might be that the Christianisation of Samoa has allowed the use of *aitu tagata* to be dropped from the address or that the older *Tusi Fa'alupega* favours the *taulauniu* of Vaiafai for some reason. It is

also possible and indeed likely that all the *taulauniu* had some form of ‘priestly’ function. If they did not, it is unlikely that the *taulauniu* could be addressed publicly as *aitu tagata*.

The work on the *Tusi Fa’alupega* of 1958 was begun by Le-Mamea and the *Tusi Fa’alupega* is largely a result of his labours. It is also notable that the *fa’alupega* of Vaiafai is more detailed than for the other ‘villages’ of Fune probably due to Le-Mamea’s family connection with Vaiafai. Without wishing to be contentious, it seems more likely that the isolating of only two *taulauniu* as being *aitu tagata* is because of this connection and his awareness of the claims of Sae and Fai. The question as to what function the *taulauniu* played is the key issue in terms of a spiritual function and the sacred status of the Tagaloa himself.

Von Bülow says that the high chief of the village (*Sa’o*) — more correctly the holder of a family’s founding title — is blessed. ‘The person holding the title is holy, inviolable. They are attributed with supernatural powers.’²⁵ This is especially so with regard to the *ao* titles. Von Bülow speaks of godly veneration of these titles and that the *ao* titles are transferred from gods to people:

Different foods and animals may only be eaten by him. They have servers — *agai* who are endowed with particular names and the office runs in particular families. The servers — *agai* of the Tagaloa are called *Gie o le Tagaloa* and are chosen from the family of the *tulafale* Moana and Tuliatu ... The South-Sea herring, *atule*, is sacred to him and therefore may not be caught with ‘deep-down’ nets.²⁶

The sacredness of the title is established with privileges and godly sanction; however, the use of the word *Gie* is unusual and it appears that in Samoa today this is not a term used in relation to the Tagaloa title. Again, it might be that von Bülow’s informant mentioned these two orators as they were of the sub-village of Matavai, which was a sub-village of Fale Tagaloa or Safune i Taoo, although it is possible that they had a definite function.

According to von Bülow, and contested by Krämer, Vaisala was named after an event at Taufasala. He states that ‘a rat came and bit [*sala*] the *taulua* in half [so that it fell down]. Therefore the village was named Vaisala.’²⁷ The reason that the village was called Vaisala (which is not clear in the German or the Samoan) is that the *vai* or water spilt due to the rat biting or cutting the *taulua* with its teeth. A chiefly or polite word for water is *taufā*, the common word is *vai*. This is the reason why it is said that Fune slept in Taufasala.

Then von Bülow says that the eight *taulauniu* were assigned, despite his earlier reference that there were only two *taulauniu* given to Fune. These appointments were as follows: Gale and Tuiasau would live in Vaisala, while Tugaga and Tagaloataoa would live in Safune. Sae and Fataloto decided to stay at Vaiafai and Fune appointed Talivā‘a and Fiu to live in Sili. Von Bülow also recounts that Faleata in Upolu was inhabited by the descendants of the Safune people. The people of Faleata were ‘unwillingly colonised’ during a war.²⁸

Von Bülow also states that the term *taulauniu* is a mythological name for Safune.²⁹ Krämer criticises this statement, saying that it is not a mythological name of Safune but was named when Tagaloalagi appointed the eight men ‘who shall sit (*tafa’i*) on either side of thee (Fune) the “Taulauniu mai le lagi”, the coconut fans from heaven protecting thee’.³⁰ He also says in a footnote that the *taulauniu* ‘bestow and proclaim the title at the same time swathing their limbs with coconut leaves’.

The term *tafa’i* is the more normal honorific for those *tulafale* who are appointed to sit on either side of holders of the sacred titles. In regard to the Fale Safune and the Tagaloa title, the *tafa’i* are normally referred to as *taulauniu*. It is also notable that in Safune all mourners carry coconut palm leaves. The village also has an *ausoga*, who ensures that neither the body nor the spirit of the Tagaloa is stolen. The sacredness of the Tagaloa is revealed in how he is respected. Krämer and von Bülow agree on this facet of the

argument. However, the role of the *taulauniu* as priest-protectors of the title is not developed. As discussed, they can also be referred to as *aitutagata* as well as *taulauniu*. Both honorifics indicate the notion of some form of spiritual authority. Krämer lists the eight *taulauniu* as Sae and Fataloto; Tugaga and Tagaloatea; Gale and Tuiasau; and Mata'afa and Taliva'a. He thus differs from von Bülow in regard to the *taulauniu* in Sili. The *Tusi Fa'alupega* agrees with Krämer as does current evidence, although Fiu has been included as one of the principal figures in Tagaloa's government as the *taulauniu* of Tuasivi, Vaimauga and Tapueleele in one Lands and Titles case.³¹ The accepted *taulauniu* of Safune i Sili are Taliva'a and Mata'afa.³² The reason why von Bülow's informant records Fiu instead of Mata'afa could have been that Mata'afa was holding the Tagaloa title at the time that von Bülow recorded the account.³³

The sacredness of titles is linked to the central meeting house. It would appear that in many villages the central meeting place was also sacred in former times. It was there that fires were lit and the *aitu* honoured. The functional purpose of these sacred sites today is their use in the bestowal of titles, which is performed there. For example, in Leulumoega there are two meeting places. Leulumoega is the capital of A'ana and is divided into two sections: Leulumoega at Alofi, and Leulumoega at Samatau. The meeting places of these two sections are Mauga and Niuapai respectively. It was at Niuapai that Sualuvi was proclaimed Tuia'ana. It is claimed that it is not possible to confer the Tuia'ana title outside one of these two meeting places.³⁴

During the conferral of high titles there are practices that are suggestive of the sacredness of the *papa* and *ao* titles. There are also practices that reveal the spiritual function of those orators who confer the title and 'sit to the left and right' of the *papa* or *ao* titleholder. The *papa* and *ao* titles are not family titles and are therefore not inherited necessarily within one lineage.³⁵ These titles are ceremonial titles and are 'sacred', as has been explained,

although Krämer — somewhat cynically — states that the *ao* titles are conferred merely to gain fine mats.

The terms *papa* and *ao* are often used indiscriminately. For example, in the Lands and Titles cases mentioned earlier, the Tagaloa is sometimes referred to as an *ao* and at other times as a *papa* title — even within a submission by a single author.³⁶ They are perceived to be interchangeable depending on what area one comes from. In secondary literature, the term *papa* is normally explained as consisting of only four titles — all conferred in Upolu. These are the four ceremonial titles needed to be held together in order to attain the ceremonial honorific *tafa'ifa*. A closer inspection of how the address *papa* is used reveals that the Safune people regard their *ao* title as sacred and a *papa* title. The four *papa*, which are supposedly needed in order to attain national leadership, are all conferred in Upolu. The *papa* or *ao* of Savai'i are neglected because of this. Also neglected are other *ao* titles, such as the *ao* of the Mata'afa in Amaile, Upolu.

In relation to these *papa* and *ao* titles, are those who serve to uphold the sacred status of the title by sitting to the left and right of the titleholder. The orators Fata and Maulolo are referred to as the *tu'itu'i* of the *papa* Natoaitele and they sit to the left and the right of the Natoaitele at the bestowal. Umaga and Pasese in Leulumoega are known as the *tafa'i* of the Tuiaana. Tupa'i and Tainau sit either side of the *papa* Tuiatua. They are called the *tu'itu'i* of the Tuiatua and, in Safune, those who sit on the right and left of the Tagaloa are called the *taulauniu*.

The majority of titles connected with harnessing the spirits were likewise *tulafale* and, as discussed, the *taulauniu* had a priestly or shamanistic function. The term *Tafa'i* also appears to have been associated with a shamanistic function. In many parts of Polynesia, *Tafaki* (*tafa'i*) 'was the model of the master shaman', while 'Maui was the prototype of the popular shaman'.³⁷

In Faleata, there is a family of *tulafale* called the Tauaitu. This village, according to von Bülow, was colonised by Safune and this seems to be confirmed by the *Fa'alupega*.

What is interesting is that in this village, as with Safune, there are orators who are referred to as having a spiritual function. Their function was to communicate with the *aitu*. The *Toafa* ('the four chiefs') — Une, Leleua, Ale and Ulu — are a unique authority. If these four want something, they inform the Tauaitu, who can then call together a *fono* in Faleata. Their combined power encompasses everything from the killing of pigs to the placing of a *sa* or *tapu* on coconut palms.³⁸ The two chiefs in Faleata, namely Mataia and Faumuina, are called by the four 'the sons of the house of the *aitu*, which is in Lepea'.

Two families have this communication with the *aitu*. The heads of these families are traditionally called Va and Vaitagutu. Today they are referred to as Veletaloola and Taliausolo. They are identified with Tauaitu. Inside the house called the 'Fale o *aitu*' there was a basket made of coconut palms. The empty basket was suspended from the roof. This symbolised that the *aitu* once dwelt there. The Tauaitu's unique role was to consult this spirit. It is unclear whether the *aitu* dwelt unseen, without physical form, or were present in the basket itself.³⁹

According to Lemana, there are also '*igoa fa'aitu*', that is, 'spirits of the *tulafale*'. Once again in Faleata, the Tulafale Ai is referred to as *taulauniu* after the *taulauniu* had consulted with the *aitu*. Lemana also makes the distinction between the terms *va'afa'atau* and *tau[la]aitu*. The *va'afa'atau* are either a group or an individual who converse with the *aitu*. The *Tauaitu* are the ones who choose between war and peace. The *va'afa'atau* follow the *aitu*'s instructions. The *taulaitu* is a man, normally a chief, whose body is possessed by the spirit. In Lemana's village, Lepea, 'there was only one Va'afa'atau. In other villages all chiefs who went to war were Va'afa'atau.'⁴⁰

It appears, then, that there are distinctions to be made between those we might term ‘priests’ and those who have a priestly role. In the *Fa’alupega* of Satupa’itea and villages connected with the *ao* of the Tonumaipé’a, the terms used are *va’a i ti* (Tupa’i) and *Va’afa’atau* for Asiata. This term is also used in Lepea for those who are responsible for carrying out the wishes of the *aitu*. The terms *va’afa’atau* and *taulaitu* are the most common terms for priests in Samoa. Faleata, which was colonised by Safune, uses the term *taulauniu* and it symbolises a priestly role and the continuation of the spirit. There are, it appears, regional differences in spiritual terms and the extent of use of these terms might indicate the spread of an individual cult over the islands. Unfortunately, it is difficult today, in a very Christianised Samoa, to find any distinction between these terms. The form *taula* — *taulaitu* or *taulasea* — is what is generally explained as meaning priest. The *taula* are, however, perhaps more clearly distinguished as being spiritual healers and shamans, but they are not necessarily dependent on their position in relation to titles, especially *ao* and *papa* titles. These *taulaitu*, rather, seem independent of those they serve. The distinction between the terms outlined allows one to realise that there are two forms of priesthood.

Taulaitu still exist today in Samoa. It appears that they are individuals who possess a special power that is recognised only within the community. It is often unclear whether these people are titled or untitled, male or female. As in traditional times, the *taulaitu* often blame sickness on the displeasure of the ancestors. Often they will be shut inside the *fale* with the mat curtains drawn, because of traditional custom. Usually they are asked to attend at a burial.

Traditional tales of *taulaitu* expressed how powerful they were. Tupa’i, the priest (*va’aiti*) of Nafanua, was said to be so powerful that he could make trees wither and die. The two *taulaitu* of the Tuifiti, the King of Fiji, were said to be so powerful that they

could make their *aitu* appear. They could also transport Sina, the daughter of A'uauumona of Salea'uala, Tutuila, back to Fiji. According to this account, her real father had just died and Sina rode on the top of her father's funeral litter, while the two *taulaitu* had to stand. Presumably affronted by this position, the Fijian *aitu* appeared and she was transported to Fiji. It is also significant that this appearance of the *aitu* is associated with the time of death, the time when the spirit appears to be most 'free': they had the ability to fly, shape-shift and appear in a different place.

Oral traditions record the events of chiefs. They distinguish the elite of the past. Not all chiefs, however, are of equal sanctity. Those who attain a level of leadership, which allows some transformation of society, are considered to be more sacred. Also these leaders tended to be genealogically closer to the primal ancestors. Stair writes of some especially sacred chiefs, or *Ali'i Paia* and names them: Tuihana, Tuiatua, Tonumaipé'a, Fonoti, Muagututia, I'amafana, I'fangu, Malietoa, Tamasoali'i and Natoaitete. These he considered the most sacred. After these, there were also Lilomaiava, Mata'afa, O Tui Manu'a, Fiamé, Salima and Levalasi.⁴¹

It is important to note again that this information is dependent on the sources or informants that Stair consulted. It is also somewhat confusing. The *papa* titles Tuihana, Tuiatua, Natoaitete and Tamasoali'i are included. These are honorifics. However, this is confused by Stair adding individual historical titleholders of these *papa*. I'amafana, Fonoti and Muagututia are individual people of the Satupua or the Tupua family, who held either all the *papa* or most of them during their historical lifetime. The *ao* titles are also present, namely Malietoa, Tonumaipé'a, Lilomaiava and Mata'afa. How he has determined their importance is again rather arbitrary. Also the *ao* of the Tagaloa is absent from this list, as are other *ao* titles of Savai'i. The inclusion of Fiamé is interesting in that this title is that of the family head of Salevalasi, a family represented mainly in the Atua district of Upolu with its headquarters in Lotofaga. The title serves their

accepted Tuiatua, namely Mata'afa. The inclusion of Fiamē indicates Stair's sources in this case were of Salevalasi and supporters of Mata'afa. Lists such as this have confused secondary sources on sacred titles, just as the 'god lists' have confused historians and commentators about the nature of *aitu*.

The key political transformers are able to achieve their magnificent deeds by means of spiritual power. The transformation from one political order into a new one is due to their supernatural prowess. Three figures — Malietoafaiga, Nofoasaefa and Tamafaiga — are consistently recurring individuals in *tala*. They were all said to be *aitutagata* possessed by *aitu*. They were frequently said to be cannibals, which is, according to Krämer, another meaning for *aituagata*. These leaders were able to achieve significant transformation by being placed above other chiefs. Their unique spiritual power was clearly recognised as the *modus operandi* for their being able to break the normal *tapu* against cannibalism, without incurring censure. These stories associated with historical figures reveal the cultural significance of the hero in Polynesian society. It is their special spiritual attributes that allow them to perform and to transform.

The highest of titles are gifts from the gods. The inheritors of these titles represent not only themselves as individual beings in the time that they live in historically; they carry with them the deeds and achievements of the first holders of the titles — just as their orators represent the first orators appointed by supernatural causes. The gifts of the first titleholders live through to the present. They are the living embodiments of political authority and the supernatural gifts of the deities who chose to honour them. Even in a very Christianised Samoa, it is not unusual for a sacred chief or orator to refer to deeds he or she performed some 300 to 400 years ago. Temporal affairs and changes in political regimes are sanctioned by supernatural forces. An understanding of the relationship between these temporal and supernatural forces is the way towards

understanding the continued temporal and supernatural power of the chiefs. The genealogical line has a deity at the apex, but that deity can intervene in the lives of individual titleholders and change the course of history. The potent power of spiritual authority might well be transformed by Christianity, but the continued power and stability of chiefly authority outside the churches is convincing testimony to the persistence in the genealogical line of a chiefly system that has remained close to its genealogical roots.

Footnotes

- 1 G. Turner, *Samoa A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before* (London, 1884), p. 256; A. Krämer, *The Samoa Islands*, 1 (Stuttgart, 1902–03), p. 76.
- 2 See Werner von Bülow, 'Beiträge zur Ethnographie der Samoa-Inseln', *IAE*, Bd. XII (1900), p. 59.
- 3 Krämer, *The Samoa Islands*, p. 115.
- 4 Von Bülow, 'Beiträge', pp. 63ff.
- 5 Krämer, *The Samoa Islands*, p. 520.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 E. Demandt, *Die Fischerei der Samoaner: Eine Zusammenstellung der bekanntesten Methoden des Fanges der Seetiere bei den Eingeborenen* (Hamburg, 1913), p. 78.
- 8 Krämer, *The Samoa Islands*, p. 467.
- 9 Ibid. p. 231.
- 10 Ibid., p. 259.
- 11 Lealaiaulotu Nofoaiga Kitiona and Fuataga Laulu Tauiliili, *O le Fa'avae o Samoa Anamua* (Western Samoa, 1985), p. 55.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 76ff.
- 13 Ibid., pp. 74ff.
- 14 See Lealaiaulotu Nofoaiga Kitiona and Fuataga Laulu Tauiliili, *O le Fa'avae o Samoa Anamua*, pp. 74ff.
- 15 Krämer, *Tatowiren, Tatauiren, Tatuiren und die Wasserflasche*, *IAE*, Bd. 28 (1927), p. 33.
- 16 M. Mead, *The Social Organisation of Manu'a* (Honolulu, 1930), p. 179.
- 17 Krämer, *The Samoa Islands*, p. 517.
- 18 Von Bülow, 'Die Samoaner in der heidnischen Zeit', *IAE*, Bd. XIV (1901), p. 25.
- 19 Von Bülow, 'Beiträge', p. 63. The original Samoan being 'Ua alu ifo ua to'otuli Fune i vae o le Tama'ita'i' (glottal stops added by present author).
- 20 These two coconut husks are normally hung on the central post of the *fale* and are used for drinking kava.
- 21 Krämer, *The Samoa Islands*, p. 161.
- 22 Title Tagalao-Taao. Faletagalao ... LC 1515, changed to f 7/9, Lands and Titles Court records, Tuasivi, Savai'i.
- 23 Chiefs and Orators of Safune ... LC 690, Lands and Titles Court, Mulinu'u.
- 24 M. K. Le-Mamea, Te'o Tuvale, T. E. Faletoes, F. F. A. and F. L. Kirisome, *O le Tusi Faalupega o Samoa* (Samoa, 1958), p. 8.
- 25 Von Bülow, 'Beiträge', p. 63.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid., p. 64. 'So that it fell down' is added in the German to indicate that water spilled from the *taulua*.
- 28 Ibid., p. 64.
- 29 Ibid.

- 30 Krämer, *The Samoa Islands*, p. 161.
- 31 LC 1515.
- 32 This title is not related to the Mata'afa of Atua in Upolu. The Safune title has a stress on the final 'a', being pronounced Mata'afaa.
- 33 According to the title case in 1923, a large proportion of petitioners argued that they had decided to bestow the Tagaloa title on the son of Mata'afa and it seems that this Mata'afa also held the Tagaloa title — although there might have been other people who held the title. c.f. LC 690.
- 34 LC 2675 — Tuia'ana title in Leulumoega.
- 35 Von Bülow, 'Die Bemühungen um die Feststellung der Urheimat der Polynesier', *Globus*, 90, II (1906), p. 64.
- 36 Note especially LC 610.
- 37 Gunson, 'Shamanistic Story and Song Cycles in Polynesia', in Tae-gon Kim and Mihály Hoppál (eds), *Shamanism in Performing Arts* (Budapest, 1995).
- 38 O. Stuebel, *Samoanische Texte* (Berlin, 1896), p. 104.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 105.
- 40 *Ibid.*, pp. 74ff.
- 41 J. B. Stair, *Old Samoa: Flotsam and Jetsam from the Pacific Ocean* (London, 1897).

Tupa'ia

The Trials and Tribulations of a Polynesian Priest

Hank Driessen

The 1769 *Endeavour* sojourn in the Society Islands¹ represents the first sustained contact between Europeans and a single Polynesian culture. During their stay of almost four months, James Cook, Joseph Banks and others recorded a substantial body of ethnographical information. One of their main informants was a 45-year-old² battle-scarred Raiatean priest living in exile on Tahiti,³ who at the time was known as Tupa'ia. The priest is best known for his map and list of islands known to him, evidence in the continuing academic debate on the extent and nature of geographical knowledge of pre-contact Polynesians that began with Cook's first voyage.⁴ Little known is that the priest had played a significant role in the sociopolitical drama that had been unfolding in the Society Islands preceding the discovery of Tahiti by Captain Wallis in 1767.

Banks, typically perhaps, was impressed by Tupa'ia's social standing and erudition, and described him as 'a most proper man, well born, chief Towha [*tahua*] or priest of this Island, consequently skilled in the mysteries of their religion'.⁵ The priest's chiefly status is evident in his claims to the many tracts of land and important

marae on the islands of Huahine and Raiatea.⁶ *Marae* were socio-religious focal points for worshippers related by close ties of consanguinity and affinity. Land rights were vested in the stone uprights or kneeling stones on the *marae* pavement, each of which represented a kin-congregation worshipping there.⁷ Genealogies, the traditional oral land records, specified *marae* names and apical-eponymous ancestors whose names had become 'family names' and were attached to the stone uprights.⁸

On Huahine, Tupa'ia claimed Mara'ire'a and Manunu, both of which were *marae* of island-wide significance because the core kin-congregation was the family of Huahine's highest-ranking *ari'i* or chief.⁹ On Raiatea, he named as his the *marae* of Taputapuatea and Tainu'u. The latter was the largest stone structure in the Leeward Group¹⁰ and was the *ari'i marae* of the Tevaitoa district on the west coast. People of the region confirmed Tupa'ia's claims.¹¹

Taputapuatea in the Opoa district on the east coast was the most sacred shrine in the archipelago, the centre of the cult for the war god 'Oro,¹² which had spread throughout the group. Tupa'ia had been a priest of this temple. The sacred chiefs of Taputapuatea claimed descent from 'Oro and were invested with the *maro 'ura* or sacred red-feather girdle of the god. Patronage of the god and a close relationship with the sacred chiefs of Opoa had become the differentiae for the gradation of rank among all the chiefs of the islands.¹³ This situation led to often violent status rivalry between the intermarrying chiefly lineages. Cook learned that the leading chiefs of the Windward and Leeward Islands were all related to one another.¹⁴ Early this century 'the highest chiefs throughout the group' still proudly traced their origins to the chiefs of *marae* Taputapuatea at Opoa.¹⁵ Given the cultural context of his *marae* claims, Tupa'ia clearly was of aristocratic rank, or 'well born', as Banks understood, on Raiatea and Huahine.

When Wallis found Tahiti in 1767, Tupa'ia already resided there,¹⁶ as a priest in the household of 'Aiorotua, the ambitious

wife of Vahitua, an influential chief at *marae* To'ora'i in the Papara district. They entered European records as Pura and Amo. The former was dubbed 'Queen of Tahiti' by Wallis, who was impressed with her authority and the deference paid by her entourage.¹⁷ Tupa'ia was Pura's 'right-hand man', her chief priest and advisor, and was like a member of her family. They were about the same age.¹⁸

Tupa'ia's residency on Tahiti and his affiliation with the Papara chiefly family were predetermined by political events that took place there several decades earlier. There was dispute between Tuitera'iatua and his older brother Aromaitera'i over succession to the title of chief of Papara. The contest was won by Tuitera'iatua, Amo's father, who argued that 'only the eldest child, whether male or female ... could set up an indefeasible right to succession'. As the oldest child, a daughter named Te'eva had gone to Raiatea and was married there; 'all the younger children had equal rights to the position of head chief'.¹⁹ The circumstance surrounding Te'eva's exit to Raiatea is suppressed in the published Papara traditions.

Other sources state that a quarrel developed between the confederated districts of Te 'Oropa'a and the neighbouring districts known collectively as Te Teva-i-uta, led by Papara. A battle ensued, recalled by traditions as Ohure-popoi-hoa, a name of 'filthy meaning'. Papara was soundly defeated and many were killed. Among a party of refugees that fled to Raiatea were Amo's paternal aunt Te'eva and his younger brother Fa'anonou. Soon afterwards Te'eva became the wife of the sacred chief of *marae* Taputapuatea, Ari'i Ma'o, and bore him a son named Mau'a.²⁰

A close friendship developed between Mau'a and his older cousin Fa'anonou. When the latter resolved to return to Papara, he obtained through the influence of Ma'ua and his mother a 'duplicate idol', made and consecrated at the *marae* of 'Oro. He was given strict instructions by the priests at Taputapuatea to convey the sacred object 'with as little pomp and ceremony as possible'. Tupa'ia, one of the priests, accompanied him.²¹

Tahitian traditions are silent on the events in the Leeward Islands that led Tupa'ia and Fa'anonou with the sacred idol to Tahiti, but the hiatus is filled by the accounts of the first European explorers. Molyneux learned that Tupa'ia had been driven from his possessions on Raiatea by invaders from the nearby high-island of Borabora, the threatening peaks of which pierced the horizon beyond the neighbouring island of Tahaa. He had been 'obliged ... to fly to Queen Obreea [Purea] for shelter'. In 1769, most of the people on the west coast of Raiatea, where Tupa'ia's lands were situated, seemed to be warriors from Borabora.²² Cook observed that they 'possess a great part of the lands of Raiatea and Tahaa ... That they had taken from the natives'.²³ The invaders were led by the feared chief Te Ihotu-mata-aroaro, known as Puni in the European journals.²⁴ Banks, expecting this 'king of the Tata Toas [*ta'ata toa*, warrior] to be young, lively and handsome', was disappointed, when meeting Puni in 1769, to be confronted by an 'old decrepid half-blind man', whose curious behaviour, Cook thought, was 'due to his stupidity'.²⁵

Raiatea's neighbouring island of Tahaa was a Borabora stronghold, mainly because of family connections.²⁶ Captain King in 1777 learned that the islands of Raiatea and Tahaa, enclosed by the same reef, were once 'as brothers together', until the latter treacherously aided the Boraborans in their conquests. Raiatea's chiefs received assistance from 'their old friends' on nearby Huahine, but after 'a long and bloody battle' the sacred island fell to Puni's forces. The warrior-chief next crossed the strait and conquered Huahine but was unable to hold it for long. Huahinean warriors who had fled to Tahiti managed to muster a fleet and freed their island in a surprise attack at dusk.²⁷ Omai, also a dispossessed Raiatean taken to England after Cook's second visit, stated that the *ari'i* of Huahine at the time of the invasion was Tereroa, the older brother of the chief Ori who ruled the island in an uneasy independence in 1774. Tereroa, assisted by supporters from Tahaa, mounted a surprise night attack and drove the invaders off. He was

later killed in another battle with Puni's forces.²⁸ Tereroa was also Mau'a's brother-in-law.

That Raiatea and Tahaa had until recently been like 'brothers' finds an echo in Raiatean traditions that the two islands were once united in a peaceful and prosperous *hau* or government called Hau Tahaa-nui-ma-Raiatea, Great-Tahaa-with-Raiatea, founded by the Opoan chief Tautu-opiri several generations before the arrival of Cook.²⁹

Cook met the incumbent sacred chief at *Marae* Taputapuatea during his second visit in 1774. This was Vete'ara'i 'U'uru, a grandson of Rofai, a younger brother of Mau'a's father Ma'o.³⁰ This scion of a cadet branch of the sacred family was 'maintained by Opune [Puni] as viceroy and chief of the Opoa district', and, although chief 'by hereditary right', he had 'little more left to him than his bare title and ... own district'. The invaders 'suffer him to possess the insignia of royalty, that is the Maroo oora [*Maro 'ura*]', King noted in 1777, but the real rulers of Raiatea were Puni's warriors.³¹ As sacred chief of Opoa, Veter'ara'i 'U'uru was the highest in rank, but the effective power was in Boraboran hands.

Genealogies shed some light on Puni's maintenance of the sacred chief. The latter's three wives all hailed from Puni's *marae* Farerua on Borabora. Two of them, the sisters Rereao and Te Roro, were direct descendants of Puni's grandfather. The first wife was called Puni, an ancestral name attached to one of the seats on that *marae*. She is identified as the daughter of Te Heatua, a sister or daughter of the conqueror Puni.³² The rule established by Puni was known as Hau Fa'anui, after the valley in Borabora in which *marae* Farerua was situated. Auna, an early convert to Christianity, who, like Tupa'ia, had been a priest at *marae* Taputapuatea, recalled his youth as a time when Raiatea was 'in subjection to the Faanuians and was completely trampled underfoot'.³³ Many people from the Leeward Islands fled to Tahiti during this time of warfare and political upheaval.³⁴

Not surprisingly, Tupa'ia 'always expressed much fear of the men from [Borabora]'.³⁵ James Magra learned from the priest that when Puni's forces descended on Raiatea, the 'inhabitants bravely exerted themselves in defence of their liberty and of their chief, who was greatly beloved'. The war — probably seasonal — continued for three years during which the sovereign of Raiatea was killed, leaving an 'infant son who was immediately invested with the Maro' — the *maro'ura*. Puni shortly afterwards won a decisive victory, the battle King learned about in 1777, and the 'young king' fled to Tahiti where he was well received. In this last battle Tupa'ia was severely wounded and escaped to the mountains until his injuries healed. Banks observed that the priest carried a number of scars, including one where a spear-point made from a stingray's tail had penetrated his body from the back.³⁶ Tupa'ia then followed 'the young king' to Tahiti, 'where he ingratiated himself even to the last favours' with 'the regent' Porea. She 'appointed him high-priest' and followed his advice 'in almost every particular'.³⁷ The sovereign killed was probably Te'éva's husband, Ari'i Ma'ō. The reference to a 'young king' presents a problem in identification. It seems probable that Magra put his own interpretation on Tupa'ia's story, in terms of what he understood the political situation to be on Tahiti. There he had learned of 'the badge of sovereignty ... a kind of red sash worn about the middle', ie., the *maro'ura*. The Europeans observed the great deference paid to Teri'irere, the son of Tupa'ia's hosts, Amo and Porea. This seven-year-old boy was carried on a man's shoulders, lest the ground he trod on should become *tapu* or sacred and thus prohibited to anyone else.³⁸ Banks recorded that this young chief was an *ari'i maro'ura*, ie., red-feather girdle chief.³⁹

This respect, Cook learned, was paid no one else 'except the Arreedehi [*ari'i rahi*, or high chief] who we had not seen'.⁴⁰ This latter reference was to the chief Tu of Pare, the leading district of the Te Porionu'u confederacy near the *Endeavour's* anchorage at Matavai Bay. It seems likely that Magra, knowing of the sacred

emblem, hearing of the high-chief Tu and seeing Teri'i-rere, connected either one with a red-feather chief fleeing Raiatea, in a story told by Tupa'ia after the ship left Tahiti. Tu, later Pomare I, was not sighted by Cook until the second voyage. That the chief fleeing Raiatea in Tupa'ia's story was Mau'a is supported by a Pomare family genealogy, which claims that Mau'a came to Papara bringing 'Oro and the red-feather-girdle called Te Ra'ipuatata'.⁴¹

According to information obtained by the missionary Robert Thomson in the 1840s, the arrival at Papara of Amo's brother Fa'anou and the priest Tupa'ia with the duplicate idol and *maro'ura* from Taputapuatea, occurred 'probably around the year 1760'.⁴² This date accords well with that obtained by Solander in 1774 for Puni's conquest of Raiatea, which, he learned, took place 'about twelve years ago'.⁴³ At Tahiti, the priest probably adopted a new name, according to custom, viz. Tupa'ia or 'Beaten', to commemorate the dramatic events of his life. At his *marae* of Tainu'u on Raiatea he was still remembered in 1774 as Parua.⁴⁴

Descendants of Fa'anou later put an entirely different complexion on the introduction of the Raiatean war god and the red-feather girdle, the possession of which led to several decades of warfare and bloodshed. In one version of their story, the Papara clan had become so powerful that the chiefs of other districts formed a confederacy to oppose them and declared war. After a battle, hostilities temporarily ceased. As their god had deserted them, the High Priest of Papara proposed that as the chiefs of Papara were 'intimately related by marriage and blood to the king of Raiatea', who was 'under the protection of the great, mighty and invincible war god Oro', a deputation should be sent for a temporary loan of the deity. This was done and 'Oro was duly installed in a temporary habitation. The subsequent tribulations of Papara's chiefs were the result of Purea's refusal to return the god to Opoa.⁴⁵ A different story has it that the father of Fa'anou and Amo had successfully contested the chiefly title of Papara against an older brother, was

defeated by neighbouring districts and went to Raiatea to ask priests there for a loan of their famed war god 'Oro.⁴⁶ Another Papara source also claimed that the 'Oro idol at their *marae* had been brought with 'great pomp from *marae* Taputapuatea of Raiatea',⁴⁷ but traditions nearer the events say that Fa'anonou and Tupa'ia adhered to the strict injunctions of the priests at Opoa. The installation of 'Oro in 'the small family *marae* adjoining the dwelling of the chief' was so 'quiet and unostentatious ... That it was scarcely known for a considerable period'. Eventually, the news spread throughout the island; the war god was 'at once adopted as the national god' of Tahiti. A long period of 'severe and bloody wars' followed, fuelled by 'a desire to possess the person of the new god'.⁴⁸

On Tahiti, Tupa'ia became embroiled in the intricacies of status politics and the unrest stemming from the ambitions of Porea and Amo to install their young son Teri'irere as an *ari'i maro'ura* in a more prestigious *marae*. During this period of uneasy peace the building of the largest stone structure in eastern Polynesia took place. This was the massive 11-tiered approximately 15-metre high *marae*, Maha'iatea at Papara, near the family *marae* of To'ora'i, in which the 'Oro idol had been quietly installed by Tupa'ia and Fa'anonou; the two structures were part of the same ritual complex at Point Maha'iatea at Papara.⁴⁹ Here Porea intended her son to be invested with the *maro'ura*.⁵⁰ Traditions name Fa'anonou as the person who raised the *marae* for the worship of the war god.⁵¹ Many districts participated in supplying stones and the human sacrifices needed to sanctify the temple.⁵² According to one tradition, the building was 'aided by relatives of the King from Raiatea'.⁵³ It seems a likely reference to Mau'a, who was related to the king, Pomare. It was Mare, the genealogist of the Pomare family, who stated in 1845 that it was Mau'a or Mau'aru'a who at Papara established his *marae* Mahaiatea and brought to Mahaiatea the *maro'ura* of Taputapuatea'.⁵⁴ The work was still in progress when Wallis arrived in 1767. Thomson, who interviewed

'several natives yet alive who remember these events', thought that it was probably the chief Amo, 'having acquired some temporary importance in consequence of the possession of Oro and the building of the marae', who came up from Papara with the fleet that attacked Wallis's ship, the *Dolphin*. The fleet scattered when the ship's guns were fired, destroying at least one of the canoes. To Wallis, the leader of the fleet appeared to be the king of the island. Once friendly relations were established by order of Amo who had watched further hostilities from One Tree Hill,⁵⁵ Purea and 'her paramour Tupaea the priest of Oro', visited the *Dolphin* at its anchorage near Point Venus. The British pennant left flying at Matavai Bay by Wallis was taken by Purea to *marae* Mahaiatea, where it was incorporated into the *maro ʻura*.⁵⁶ Banks saw the *marae* in ruins in June 1769 and found 'its size and workmanship almost exceeds belief'.⁵⁷ When the massive *marae* was completed, discord arose when 'a Raiatean chief named Faʻanonou' proposed to enshrine the new war god there. This was resisted by some of the Tahitians, not wishing to have their own gods displaced. The dispute became heated and many of those who had assisted in the building returned home. 'Only one of their chiefs, Ariʻi-Mana [Ariʻi-Mauʻa] remained with Pomare at Tahiti.'⁵⁸

After the departure of Wallis, the *marae* was completed and 'Oro installed there as 'the national god' of the island. Amo, having 'gained a new and paramount importance', began 'to think of dominion, and to devise the means by which he might accomplish this end'. Afraid to attempt it by war, he had recourse to an expedient, probably suggested by Tupaʻia, the priest of 'Oro, who had accompanied the god from Raiatea, and who is said by the people to have been one of the cleverest men of the island.⁵⁹ They decided to send 'the flag of Oro' around the island; the chiefs of each district would show 'their submission to the new God, by allowing the flag to pass in triumph'.⁶⁰ This flag or *vane* was made from cloth also obtained from Wallis's *Dolphin*. Many chiefs met

the *vane* at their *marae* and allowed it to pass. When the ceremonial procession reached the peninsula of Tairapu, however, its chief, Vehiatua, a widely feared and cruel warrior, exclaimed, 'Who are the *feia inio*, the degraded people here, who will allow this flag to pass thru the district?', and, seizing it, he tore it to pieces and sent it back to Amo, who resolved to declare war against Tairapu.⁶¹

Vehiatua, 'more prompt at war exploits' than Amo, attacked Papara immediately by land and by sea in December 1768.⁶² The battle was short but bloody. Ma'i, another brother of Amo, lost his life and 'Vehiatua had his body cooked in an oven'. Many were killed and the sea and coast became littered with bodies. The victors returned to Tairapu after plundering the district. This was the Battle of Mata Toroa or 'Tentacle Eyes', named after the cuttlefish that inhabited the skulls of the slain and projected their long feelers through the eye sockets.⁶³ Banks, who saw the ruined *marae* and the nearby scene of carnage, recorded that 'every where under our feet were numberless human bones' and he was told these were the remains of those killed by warriors from Tairapu. Amo and Porea, and no doubt also Tupa'ia, had been 'obliged to fly for shelter to the mountains'.⁶⁴

Later Papara sources omit these details and place the blame for the disaster on the ambitions of Porea, an affine and not of Papara blood.⁶⁵ This was the War of the Rahui, named after the sacred restrictions imposed by Porea and Amo in preparation for their son's inauguration with the red-feather girdle. Protests against this *rahui* by several chiefly families, including Porea's own from the district of Ahura'i, were ignored. The main opponent to the sacred restriction, however, was a chieftess named Purahi, a direct descendant of Aromaitera'i, who had lost the contest to his younger brother Tuitera'itua two generations earlier. She thus could claim to belong to the senior branch of the Papara chiefly family. She was also the daughter of Amo's sister and resented the status claimed for her cousin Teri'irere. Ari'i Taimai, our main Papara source, pithily

noted that 'Purahi was supported by Vehiatua,'⁶⁶ but in fact she was his wife and had born him two sons.⁶⁷ Vehiatua attacked during preparations for the great feast of inauguration of Teri'irere. Amo and Porea, with their son, escaped over the mountains to the district of Ha'apape, the chief of which was a relative of Amo.⁶⁸

Thomson's sources, closer to the events, stated that the attack was so sudden that Amo was unable to rally his allies. The chiefs of Te 'Oropa'a and Te Porionu'u arrived too late to turn the tide. The Papara chief and his allies escaped with 'the priest of Oro [Tupa'ia] who had charge of the sacred and royal girdle and various other relics brought with the idol from Raiatea'. These were deposited in a *marae* at Atehuru,⁶⁹ the leading district of Te 'Oropa'a. Until it was safe for him to return to Papara, Amo then resided with his Te Porionu'u ally, chief Teu of Pare,⁷⁰ known as Hapai to Banks and others in 1769.⁷¹

It was probably about this time that the chiefs of Papara and Pare formed a marriage alliance by which Amo's seven-year-old son, Teri'irere, would become the husband of Teu's 20-year-old daughter, Teri'i Navahoroa. The latter was known at the time as To'imata, after the sister of the war god 'Oro. Banks described her as 'a fine wild woman'⁷² and commented that as the boy was so young 'they have not yet cohabited together'.⁷³ This was a political arrangement that united two claims to Mau'a's red-feather girdle and the 'Oro idol. The second claim was on the side of Teu's family and was based on direct kinship ties with 'Oro's sacred chiefs at Opoa — denied Porea and Amo. The Pare-Opoa connection was, however, with the cadet branch maintained by Tupa'ia's archenemy Puni. Teu's wife, variously known as Piriroa, Marorai and Te Tupaia, was the sister or half-sister of the sacred chief Vete'ara'i 'U'uru.⁷⁴ That she was *matabiapo*, or firstborn, strengthened the case of the Pare chiefly family, because it gave her descendants higher status and probably priority claim rights to the sacred red-feather girdle and the 'Oro idol. The family's claims were vested not

in To'imata, but in Piri-roa's next-born child, her son Tu-nui-e-e'e-i-te-Atua, later Pomare I.

He was not sighted by Cook and others in 1769, as already mentioned. The records of the ill-fated Spanish mission, located in Vehiatua's territory of Tautira, reveal that even there, Tu, as he was commonly known, was acknowledged as 'the principal Chief of the Island', and all other chiefs 'look up to the Arii Otu as the higher and paramount chief'.⁷⁵ Pura acknowledged Tu's right to call himself an *ari'i maro 'ura*. Among the guests said to have been invited to Teri'irere's donning with the red-feather girdle was 'Teri'i maro 'ura at Taraho'i', the latter being Tu's *marae* in Arue where he was also chief. It was granted that Piri-roa 'gave to her descendants the claim to wear the *maro 'ura* in Raiatea'.⁷⁶ On Tahiti, however, the issue to be resolved in 1769 concerned the relative rights to claim the *maro 'ura* introduced by Tupa'ia and Mau'a when Raiatea fell under the hegemony of Puni's Hau Fa'anui.

It is significant in view of Tu's claims that one of the chiefly women protesting against Pura's *rahui* shortly before the destruction of the *marae*, was her brother's daughter, Rai-i-tea. Better known from European sources as Itia, she would become the wife of Tu. Itia approached Point Mahaiatea in her 'state canoe', knowing that if she was welcomed in a state befitting her status the *rahui* would be broken. From the beach, Pura warned her off. But Itia came ashore, she sat down and cut her head with a shark's tooth until blood started to flow. 'This was her protest in form; an appeal to blood. Unless it were wiped away it must be atoned by blood,' according to Ariitaimai. This head-cutting behaviour in the Society Islands generally signalled extremes of emotion, of joy, sorrow or anger. Manea, as Tupa'ia's friend Fa'anonou was then known, interposed and admonished Pura to be careful, saying, 'One end of the Maro holds the Porionuu, the other end the Tevas; the whole holds the Oropaa'.⁷⁷ Couched in a poetic metaphor, Fa'anonou stated that rights to the *maro 'ura* were with both Tu's districts of Te

Porionu'u and the Teva districts of Amo. The marital arrangements for the chiefly children thus united the two ends of the *maro*. Situated between them lay the confederacy of Te 'Oropa'a, which could control both ends of the sacred girdle. Fa'anou's warning was to come true because, as noted, it was to Atehuru, the leading district of the 'Oropa'a, that the *maro* and the idol were taken by Amo's allies after the fall of Mahaiatea. There Cook saw the *maro* 'at the great Morai at Attahourou' in 1777. It was 'about five yards long, and composed of red and yellow feathers' and 'the whole sewed to the upper end of the English Pendant' left by Wallis. This was at *marae* Utuaimahurau, a site no longer extant,⁷⁸ where it remained under the control of the chiefs of Atehuru until 1790, when Tu, then Pomare I,⁷⁹ at last gained possession by force and took it to Pare, his own district.

The chief of Atehuru, who played the role of 'powerbroker' by lodging the sacred regalia in his own *marae*, was an old man of great influence and authority named Tutaha, dubbed Hercules by Cook and Banks in 1769 because of his size. To them, he appeared 'the Chief man of the Island'. He was living in Teu's district of Pare when the *Endeavour* arrived, his ally against Vehiatua during the attack on Papara. Teu was also his nephew, the son of his older brother. Tutaha, Banks learned, was 'as a Locum tenens for ... [Tu, Teu's son], the Areerahie [*ari'i-rabi* or high-chief] ... during the latter's Minocurity' [sic]. The people of Tautira, Vehiatua's territory, were still 'at war with Tootaha'.⁸⁰ Vehiatu's revenge against Te Porionu'u and Te 'Oropa'a for having come to the assistance of Papara and having rescued the sacred regalia, was temporarily suspended when the *Endeavour* arrived.⁸¹ After Cook's departure, the war between Tutaha and Vehiatua resumed. The latter briefly went to Raiatea to pay 'a visit to Oro, to propitiate his favour, as the image of that God which had been sent to Tahiti was now in the hands of his enemies'. Vehiatua died in 1771. Tutaha led the forces of Te Porionu'u and Te Oropa'a against Tautira, but they were

soundly defeated in March 1773. He was killed and his body was mutilated in contempt by his enemies on his own *marae* at Atehuru.⁸² But all that was after Tupa'ia had left Tahiti.

The *Endeavour* sailed from Tahiti on July 13, 1769, with Tupa'ia, because of Cook's reluctance to take the priest as a supernumerary, in the care of Banks, who wished 'to keep him as a curiosity, as well as some of my neighbours do lions and tygers at a larger expence than he will probably ever put me to'.⁸³ Cook was pleased to have Tupa'ia on board because he was 'a very intelligent person' who knew 'more of the geography of the Islands situated in these seas, their produce and the religion, laws and customs of the inhabitants than any one we had met with'.⁸⁴

As the ship prepared to sail, the priest shed 'a few heartfelt tears', Banks recorded, 'or so I judge them to have been by the Efforts I saw him make use of to hide them'.⁸⁵

Tupa'ia guided the *Endeavour* to the Leeward Islands, whereby Cook became the 'discoverer' of the group. At Huahine, the visitors were asked repeatedly for assistance against the Boraborans who regularly raided the island.⁸⁶ Tupa'ia next guided the ship across the Strait of Marama to Raiatea and safe anchorage in Ava Moa,⁸⁷ the Sacred Harbour at Opoa's Taputapuatea. Tupa'ia thought that next day the warriors from Borabora would probably attack and therefore little time was lost on going ashore, where Cook hoisted the English flag and, unbeknown to the inhabitants, formerly took possession of all the islands in sight 'for the use of his Britannick majesty'.⁸⁷ At *marae* Taputapuatea, Tupa'ia explained that the rows of human jawbones tied to a canoe belonged to Raiateans killed in the war. If they met Puni's kinsman, the sacred chief Veteara'i 'U'uru, it was not reported in the official journals, although Banks did record the name 'Auuhlu' in his notebook as 'the Grand Chief' of Raiatea.⁸⁸

Tupa'ia next guided the *Endeavour* to the west side of Raiatea at Ha'amanino Bay. Banks noted that Tupa'ia had often

spoken of his lands lost to the Boraborans and 'these he tells us now are situated in the very bay where the ship lies'. The inhabitants of the district identified several tracts of land 'which they all acknowledge belong of right to him'.⁸⁹ If Tupa'ia had guided the *Endeavour* to the very region where his lands and *marae* were situated, in the hope that the Boraborans would attack and evoke the same response as the *Dolphin* at Tahiti two years earlier, he was to be disappointed. The Boraborans on the west coast established a friendly relationship with the foreigners. Parkinson stated that they met the ruling chief Orea or Oreo and his family near the anchorage,⁹⁰ a Boraboran who was 'a kind of Governor ... On Puni's side, and a brother or relation of 'U'uru'.⁹¹ There is no evidence that Tupa'ia was with them when they met Puni to thank him for a gift of produce.⁹² Cook was taken by Puni for a brief visit to his chief residence on Tahaa.⁹³ Tupa'ia appears to have avoided meeting his old enemy. And so, on August 9, 1769, the *Endeavour* 'launched into the Ocean, in search of what chance and Tupia might direct us to.'⁹⁴

But as the ship left the familiar waters of the Society Islands, Tupa'ia seems to have lost his bearings. The ship bore south and the priest predicted that if they sailed slightly more to the east, they would come to an island named Manua, where he and his father had been. There is no island thus named in that direction. As the ship headed to the lee, they would next reach an island named Hitiroa. Instead, they reached Rurutu, which he did not identify as such, although he had named Rurutu in a list of islands and placed it on his famous map. Rurutu for many decades became Hitiroa, although, as the missionary Davies pointed out, 'The natives themselves call it Rurutu and so do their neighbours, but it is seldom that navigators get the true native names ... owing to their not being acquainted with the languages of the people they visit.'⁹⁵ After having given valuable service in New Zealand,⁹⁶ the priest's usefulness as an interpreter came to an end when the *Endeavour* left

the Polynesian world. When the *Endeavour* reached Batavia, Cook recorded, 'we lost but seven men in the whole', including Tupa'ia, 'to the unwholesome air of Batavia'. 'He was a Shrewd Sensible, Ingenious Man, but proud and obstinate which often made his situation on board both disagreeable to himself and those about him, and tended much to promote the deceases [sic] which put a period to his life.'⁹⁷

The fate of Ma'ua or Mau'a-rua as Mare called him, mirrors that of Tupa'ia. In the published Spanish sources of January 1774, we learn that the *Aguila* made an exploratory journey to the Leeward Islands from Tahiti, with two native pilots on board, named Puhoro and one who was 'a native Chief of [Raiatea] named Mabarua'. Corney, the editor, notes that his sources also referred to him as Mavarua and similar forms that were impossible spellings for a Tahitian name. On Raiatea, Mavarua briefly acted as an interpreter but no details are given and the ship returned to Tahiti. Having landed the missionaries on Tahiti, the *Aguila* made ready to return to Lima. Numerous Islanders wanted to sail with her and four were selected. Two of them were the pilots Puhoro and Mavarua. The latter, recorded Don Thomas Gayangos, was 'one of the principal persons of rank in the island of Orayatea [Raiatea], being an uncle by blood to the arii Otu, at whose special intercession I took him'.⁹⁸ Two of the Tahitians died in Peru and only one of the remaining two wished to return home when the *Aguila* sailed to Tahiti in November that year. That was Puhoro.⁹⁹

Footnotes

- 1 The name given by Captain Cook to the Leeward Islands of Huahine, Raiatea, Tahaa, Borabora and Maupiti, because 'they lay contiguous to one another'. James Cook, J. C. Beaglehole (ed.), *The Journals of Captain James Cook*, I (Cambridge, 1968), p. 151. Today, the name includes the Windward Islands of Tahiti and Moorea.
- 2 Joseph Banks, J. C. Beaglehole (ed.), *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks 1768–1771* (Sydney, 1962), p. 270.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 576; James Magra, *A Journal of a Voyage Around the World ...* (London, 1771), p. 62.
- 4 G. M. Dening, 'The Geographical Knowledge of the Polynesians and the Nature of Inter-Island Contact', in Jack Golson (ed.), *Polynesian Navigation* (Wellington, 1972).
- 5 Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, p. 312.
- 6 Joseph Banks, MS, 'Observations de Otaheite &c.', University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies.
- 7 D. L. Oliver, *Ancient Tahitian Society*, II (Canberra, 1974), pp. 622–6.
- 8 John Davies, *Tahitian and English Dictionary, With Introductory Remarks* (Tahiti, 1851), p. iv; Teuira Henry, *Ancient Tahiti* (Honolulu, 1928), p. 263 — genealogy of Marotetini *marae*: the opening eight 'sons' were in fact names attached to the eight stone seats of this Boraboran *marae*.
- 9 William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches ...*, 1 (London, 1829), p. 323. Ellis here misspells and mistranslates Teri'itaria, the highest-ranking chiefly title, and Manunu. Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, p. 150.
- 10 Kenneth P. Emory, *Stone Remains in the Society Islands* (Honolulu, 1933), pp. 35, 150.
- 11 J. R. Forster, M. Hoare, (ed), *The Resolution Journal of Johann Reinhold Forster 1772–1775*, III (London, 1982), p. 524.
- 12 Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, p. 121.
- 13 Colin Newbury, 'Te Hau Pahu Rahi. Pomare II and the Concept of Inter-Island Government in Eastern Polynesia', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, Vol. 76 (1967), pp. 484–92.
- 14 Cook, *The Journals of*, II, p. 411.
- 15 Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, p. 119.
- 16 Cook, *The Journals of*, I, p. 554. When first visiting the *Endeavour*, Tupa'ia recognised Lieutenant Gore, who was master's mate aboard the *Dolphin* in 1767. Few Islanders can be identified in the records of Wallis's visit. Banks, 'Observations de Otaheite', p. 270.
- 17 Arii Taimai, Henry Brook Adams (ed.), *Tahiti: Memoir of Arii Taimai* (Ridgewood, 1901), pp. 16, 32, 40, 49–52; Cook, *The Journals of*, I, p. 84; George Robertson, *The Discovery of Tahiti* (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 203–6.

- 18 Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, p. 270; Magra, *A Journal of*, p. 63; Cook, *The Journals of*, I, pp. 84, 85.
- 19 Arii Taimai, *Tahiti*, pp. 29, 31; Takau Pomare, *Memoirs de Marau Taaroa, Derniere Reine de Tahiti* (Paris, 1971), p. 199. Taimai and Takau mention in passing that Te'eva had gone to Raiatea and was married there. For an analysis of these sources, see Niel Gunson, 'A Note on the Difficulties of Ethno-Historical Writing', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, LXII (19??) pp. 415–19; Robert Langdon, 'Tahiti's Traditional History — Without Adams?', *Journal of Pacific History*, 4 (1969), pp. 162–5.
- 20 The tradition is recorded in John Davies (ed.), *Te Faaite Tahiti 1836–37*, pp. 6, 66–9, a didactic periodical in Tahitian published by the missionaries. Robert Thomson, MS, 'History of Tahiti', p. 16, SOAS, Archives of the Council for World Missions, also has the tradition.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 16; Davies, 'Te Faaite', p. 67.
- 22 Cook, *The Journals of*, p. 563; Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, p. 326.
- 23 Cook, *The Journals of*, I, p. 151.
- 24 Tati Salmon, *History of the Island of Borabora ...* (Papeete, c.1904).
- 25 Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, pp. 1, 327; Cook, *The Journals of*, I, p. 150. It seems likely that Puni at the time might have been imbibing too much *ava*.
- 26 Puni's mother, Te Pu'etua, was of *marae* Taianapa at Vaitoare, in Taha'a's Hauino district; MS, Genealogy of the Marotetini (Farerua) family, Captain Winnifred Brander, 'Society Islands Genealogies', Bishop Museum, Honolulu.
- 27 Cook, *The Journals of*, III, pp. 2, 1389.
- 28 James Burney, Beverley Hooper (ed.), *With Captain Cook in the Antarctic and Pacific* (Canberra, 1975), pp. 71–2. Mai was also understood to have said that Tereroa's deceased sister was one of Puni's wives.
- 29 John Williams, *Narrative of a Missionary Enterprise ...* (London, 1840), p. 61.
- 30 Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, pp. 248–9, 152.
- 31 Cook, *The Journals of*, II, p. 425.
- 32 Tupuna o Overe-Taupie, Tati Salmon, MS, Society Islands Notes, Bishop Museum Honolulu. Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, p. 251. Salmon's 1899 sketch of the *marae* names Rereao and Puni as attached to the same stone seat.
- 33 Charles Barff, MS, 'Memoir of Auna', Misc. Correspondence 1838, Supreme Court Papers, Archives of NSW. Davies, 'Te Faaite', pp. 3, 25.
- 34 George Foster, *A Journal of a Voyage Round the World ...*, I (London, 1777), p. 390; Cook, *The Journals of*, III, pp. 2, 1389.
- 35 Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, p. 317.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 376.
- 37 Magra, *A Journal of*, pp. 62ff.

- 38 Ibid., p. 47.
- 39 Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, p. 293. The postnatal tapu-removing ceremonies were delayed for high-born children.
- 40 Cook, *The Journals of*, I, p. 104.
- 41 MS, genealogy book of the Pomare family held by the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, entitled 'E Puta Tupuna no te Hui Ari'i ra, a Tu-nui-e-a'a-i-te-atua'. Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, p. 252, erroneously attaches the same gloss to Ari'i Ma'o.
- 42 Thomson, 'History of Tahiti', p. 17.
- 43 Cook, *The Journals of*, II, p. 949.
- 44 Forster, *A Journal of*, III, p. 524.
- 45 Frank Burnett, *Through Polynesia and Papua* (London, 1911), pp. 32–7. Told by Tati Salmon, great-grandson of the chief Tati, see note 46.
- 46 George Peard, *To the Pacific with Beechy ...* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 128. Told by the Papara chief Tati in 1826. This chief was the grandson of Fa'anonou and the great-grandfather of Tati Salmon, see note 45.
- 47 Marau Taaroa, 'Les Marae de Papara, Leurs Histoire', *Bulletin de Societe des Etudes Oceaniennes*, 2: 21 (1927), p. 299. Marau was the sister of Tati Salmon.
- 48 Thomson, 'History of Tahiti', pp. 16–18.
- 49 Emory, *Stone Remains*, p. 74.
- 50 Arii Taimai, *Tahiti*, pp. 46, 57.
- 51 Thomson, 'History of Tahiti', p. 27; Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, p. 138.
- 52 Davies, 'Te Faaite', 6, 68; Thomson, 'History of Tahiti', 37.
- 53 Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, p. 138.
- 54 Great Britain and Ireland Parliamentary Papers, Correspondence Relative to the Society Islands, p. 34.
- 55 Thomson, 'History of Tahiti', p. 15; Robertson, *The Discovery of*, p. 135.
- 56 It was sighted in 1777 by Cook in the marae of Purea's opponent, Tu-Pomare I.
- 57 Banks *The Endeavour Journal*, I, p. 303.
- 58 Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, p. 138. The source here is Ninito Summer, the sister of Arii Taimai and thus a descendant of Fa'anonou. I suspect Henry mistranscribed 'Mana' for Mau'a. I did the same thing. No Raiatean chief named Mana is known from other sources.
- 59 Thompson, 'History of Tahiti', p. 38.
- 60 Ibid., pp. 38, 39.
- 61 Ibid., p. 39.
- 62 Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, p. 305.
- 63 Thomson, 'History of Tahiti', 40. This battle is also listed in J. M. Orsmond, 'Names of their various wars', MS, War, Tahiti, A2602, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

- 64 Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, p. 305.
- 65 Arii Taimai, *Tahiti*, p. 59.
- 66 *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 46, 59.
- 67 Bolton Glanvill Corney (ed.), *The Quest and Occupation of Tahiti* (London, 1915), pp. II, xxxvii, interalia.
- 68 Arii Taimai, *Tahiti*, pp. 57-61.
- 69 Or Atehuru, the present district of Paea.
- 70 Thomson, 'History of Tahiti', pp. 39, 40.
- 71 Banks, 'Observations de', p. 9.
- 72 *Ibid.*; H. A. H. Driessen, 'Dramatis Personae of Society Islanders, Cook's *Endeavour* Voyage 1769', *Journal of Pacific History*, 17: 3-4 (1982).
- 73 Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, I, p. 293. Banks thought To'imata was about 16. Cook, *The Journals of*, I, p. 104, took them for siblings and estimated her to be about 20.
- 74 Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, pp. 249-51. Great Britain and Ireland Parliamentary Papers, Correspondence, II, p. 24; III, pp. 34, 65.
- 75 Corney, *The Quest*, I, p. 307; II, p. 79.
- 76 Arii Taimai, *Tahiti*, pp. 58, 59, 86. 'The various great chiefs who were summoned to the Feast show the extent of Ter'irere's influence.' Tu is not referred to by name but as Teriimaroura at Tarahoi.
- 77 Arii Taimai, *Tahiti*, p. 46. The MS, Genealogies of Arii Taimai's son, Tati Salmon, identify Manea as Fa'anonou; he was also called Te Varua-o-Temaharo. The latter was probably the title for him having a priestly role. Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, p. 270, in a Papara genealogy from Mare, has him under this title.
- 78 Cook, *The Journals of*, III: pp. 1, 198-203.
- 79 Arii Taimai, *Tahiti*, p. 109; she wrongly identifies the *marae* as Maraeta'ata in Paea.
- 80 Cook, *The Journals of*, I, pp. 78, 85, 107; Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, pp. 253, 268, 271, 385; Pomare's Genealogy, in MS 'Putā Tupuna no Te Arii Ra, o Tu-nui-e-aa-i-te-atua', Bishop Museum, Honolulu.
- 81 Thomson, 'History of Tahiti', p. 40.
- 82 *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 52; Cook, *The Journals of*, II, p. 202; III, pp. 1, 20.
- 83 Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, p. 313
- 84 Cook, *The Journals of*, I, p. 114.
- 85 Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, pp. 313-14.
- 86 Cook, *The Journals of*, I, p. 144.
- 87 Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, p. 318; Cook, *The Journals of*, I, p. 144.
- 88 Driessen, 'Dramatis Personae', p. 231.
- 89 Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, p. 326; Cook, *The Journals of*, I, p. 153.

- 90 Cook, *The Journals of*; p. 73.
- 91 As they learned in 1773; Cook, *The Journals of*; II, pp. 224, 429.
- 92 *Ibid.*, p. 150.
- 93 Banks, *The Endeavour Journal*, p. 327.
- 94 *Ibid.*, p. 327.
- 95 J. Davies, C. W. Newbury (ed.), *The History of the Tahitian Mission 1799-1830* (Cambridge, 1961), p. 282.
- 96 Anne Salmond, *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog: Captain Cook in the South Seas* (London, 2003), p. 116, interalia.
- 97 Cook, *The Journals of*; p. 442.
- 98 Corney, *The Quest*, II, pp. 160–3, 173.
- 99 *Ibid.*, pp. 357, 480.

God in Samoa and the Introduction of Catholicism

Andrew Hamilton

St Paul has said that the essence of religion lies in belief in the existence and the justice of God. However gross the form under which the old Samoans professed this double belief, they did not render any less homage to the Apostle's teaching. In their own way they felt and expressed that need of human nature to believe in a God who watches over men and who will judge them, noble need which only sophists, in societies in decadence, have been able to gainsay.¹

These words of the 19th-century Catholic mission historian Father Monfat sum up the encounter which Catholicism and its ideas of God had with the Samoan notions of the Divine. It can be seen that the Catholic historian was by no means inclined to relegate pre-Christian Samoans to depraved pagan blindness. Indeed, he could call on both St Paul and Catholic theology to point the moral that Samoans, like other members of the human race, were capable of discerning the deity by natural reason. In this, like Father Violette, the missionary priest who was his chief source, Monfat applied the dogmatic conclusions of the First Vatican

Council — that the One God can be known by the natural light of human reason — to *fa'a samoa* (Samoan culture) in its religious aspect.

Monfat, however, when he speaks of 'sophists, in societies in decadence', was using the natural lights of pagan *fa'a samoa* to reflect on European morals and to instruct particularly his own country, France. In doing so Monfat echoed not only the preconceptions, but the very background of the French Catholic missionaries who were rivals to earlier Anglo-Saxon Protestantism in Samoa.

These French missionaries came from an embattled tradition. They were well aware of this compared with their Protestant counterparts from the London Missionary Society. LMS missionaries might come from the 'workshop of the world', the first industrialiser, yet Britain had kept, without any traumatic break, forms of tradition such as the Monarchy and Christian clergy had not been guillotined there for the practice of their faith. Britain, moreover, was the winner in war — and it was largely British ships that sailed or steamed through the Pacific. This the French missionaries knew all too well and a certain militant French patriotism was mixed with their militant Catholicism.

The late 18th and early 19th centuries, which saw major and traumatic changes to the cultures and societies of the Pacific, also saw great and traumatic changes in the cultures and societies of the European contactors. The Catholic Church and France were profoundly involved and affected. For these years saw the French Revolution, which was critical in the history of Europe and European culture. If one may essay a quasi-Samoan point of view, the Revolution directly assailed *fa'a papalagi* or European tradition, which, as in the case of *fa'a samoa*, had been sanctioned by sacred tradition.

The church, of course, was directly criticised and impugned. In the 1790s, moreover, traditional organised Christianity in France had to suffer a direct assault and martyrdoms at the hands of the

Revolutionaries. The end of the decade saw the Pope a captive of Revolutionary France.

Yet European and French tradition were still strong. The coronation of General Napoleon Bonaparte as Emperor Napoleon I in 1804 showed that already a somewhat ersatz version of tradition had been reconstructed in France. Previously, Napoleon had concluded the Concordat with the Pope. True, he had aspired to dominate and use the church, but the role of the Papacy in France was also strengthened as a result of his policies and the Concordat and Papal authority were to survive Napoleon and his regime.

After 1814, France and Europe were to know a fuller restoration of *fa'a papalagi* and a revival of Catholicism. France thereafter, however, was to change regimes with some frequency. Thus, French missionaries to Samoa first arrived in the days of King Louis Phillipe, a pro-liberal usurper from within the ranks of the traditional royal lineage. Then, from 1848 to 1852, they were citizens of the Second Republic. From 1852–70, they looked to Napoleon's nephew, Emperor Napoleon III. Then, in the wake of a catastrophic national defeat, they were to end up citizens of the Third Republic, which at the end of the 19th century was increasingly pursuing anti-clerical policies.

In general, however, the 19th century seems to have seen a considerable revival in European Christianity, in Catholicism and Protestantism. This revival animated the Catholic Church and French Catholics in their approach to missions, as did the need to make up for the religious and national disasters of the revolutionary and Napoleonic periods.

The Samoans, for their part, were to show themselves generally receptive to the various versions of Christianity that came their way in the 19th century. The arrival of the *papalagi* ('the strangers from beyond the sky') profoundly affected a society where power coalesced or dispersed among contending chiefs and where for centuries there had been contacts of conflict, chiefly dominance and subordination with Tonga and Fiji.

The traditional religion of *fā'a samoa* was one of worship and dealings with gods and spirits. If we follow the 19th-century Protestant missionary writer, John B. Stair, there seems to have been a division between *atua*, the high gods, and *aitu*, created or formerly human spirits. Stair, in fact, talked of a further subordinate class of *aitu*, termed *sauali'i*.² The Catholic sources generally agree in dividing the Samoan pantheon into *atua* and *aitu*.

Atua might well have been somewhat remote from the general affairs of humanity, but *aitu* were greatly involved in them and needed to be invoked, placated or communicated with frequently. This was done through spiritual possession by *aitu* of individual human oracles. Such mediums, or *tualaitu*, seem to have played an important role in Samoan culture's religious expressions, their roles often coinciding with the religious roles of heads of families and certain chiefs. It might well be that the late pre-Christian religion of Samoa was an affair mainly of shamanistic communication with *aitu*, mainly by shamanistic mediums talking in the voices of departed kin or of powerful *aitu*.³

One of the fullest 19th-century Protestant missionary sources, George Turner, talks of a multitude of *aitu* (a term he translates as 'gods'). He assigns Tagaloa a leading place among them as high god of the heavens.⁴ Turner also describes two deities called Nafanua, one a goddess of western Savai'ian provenance, who possessed characteristics of a war goddess. The other was a male deity from Upolu, who, besides being a war deity, specialised in hunting down and punishing the guilty and healing the sick.⁵

Turner, however, shares a Protestant tendency to describe Nafanua as a powerful female *aitu* (analogous to a war goddess). There is a tradition that a few generations before the arrival of the first Christian missionaries, she promised the then holder of the powerful Malietoa chiefly title that a Malietoa would receive government, or a title to government, from heaven. When the British Congregational missionary John Williams arrived in Samoa

in 1830, Malietoa Vainu'upo, it is said, looked on this as the fulfilment of Nafanua's prophecy.⁶

Nineteenth-century Catholics recorded an alternative version of Nafanua, which described this deity as male and the supreme god. This might represent a rival version to that recorded by Protestants; coming perhaps from the powerful Mata'afa lineage, as Mata'afa Fagamanu was an early patron and eventual convert of the Catholics. Father Théodore Violette, the priest who is our source for this alternative version of Nafanua, when writing in Savai'i in 1847 and drawing on the memories and ideas of an old chief there, mentions 'Tagaloa-lagi' in the context of a creation myth but asserts that he was originally only a human being. He also says that he noticed no worship of any creator: 'These people recognise no deity in the proper sense but only spirits. They say these spirits are totally evil and without mercy.'⁷ However, in 1870, he writes:

They admit a spirit superior to all created spirits: no moment of beginning is known for him. His name is Nafanua: he lives in the heavens. All the archipelago makes offerings to him. He is the master of victory in battles; so when one side see themselves vanquished, they cry: 'See Nafanua has gone over to the enemy's side!' Everyone strives by prayers and offerings to attach him to their own side.⁸

Violette, then, has this to say about Tagaloa:

The Samoans admit nine heavens. Each heaven is governed by its own chief. They say that there are many inhabitants there. Tagaloalagi [sic], who governs the two lower heavens, and who passes for a tyrant, has power over the sun and over a great number of spirits.⁹

In the context of recounting a creation myth (in which Tagaloa assists and presides, rather than being the creator), Violette says, 'Tagaloalagi, who is only purely man.'¹⁰ According to Violette:

The word *aitu* only presented to the mind of the Samoans the idea of a being nasty in nature which must be placated by offerings. This name [*aitu*] alone inspired in them a fear of which they are still not free.

Siuleo is the master of the spirits. Moso is the first of the created spirits. Then comes a crowd of subordinate spirits, from among whom, each province, each district, each village and even each family, chooses their own. They commit themselves to honour him, appease him by offerings, by orations, to build him houses of breadfruit tree wood and to raise terraces to him. From his side he must give health, and drive away evils etc.

The spirits, say the natives, inhabit an abyss, which lies at the place where the sun goes down at its setting. The Samoans have only horror for this place, where no master at all is recognised, where everyone gives orders. It is into there that souls leaving the bodies at death fall; and they become spirits. Their ideas on transmigration are not precisely formulated.¹¹

Violette says that each spirit has its own particular voice, with its own distinctive tone. He speaks of how these voices are transmitted through *aitu* possession of priests or priestesses, known as *tualaaitu*.

These priests and priestesses were divided into three classes. They distinguished the *tualaaitu* for spells, the *tualaaitu* who worked prodigies and the *tualaaitu* who discovered the cause of illnesses.¹²

Violette describes various ways of placating *aitu*. Faults could be confessed to them through the medium of the *tualaaitu*. On occasions such as the outbreak of epidemics, kava, food and cloth could be presented to the spirits; such offerings were henceforth sacred and forbidden for human use.¹³

Here Violette echoes Turner's account of the Upolu male Nafanua's dealings with humanity.¹⁴ Stair, on the other hand,

associates such conduct with another deity, Moso, whom he describes as one of the great land gods in opposition to Tagaloa, the god of the heavens.¹⁵ Violette, as has been seen, views Moso merely as 'the first of the created spirits'.¹⁶

Violette goes on to say:

Each family had its particular spirit [*aitu*]: some held the dove to be sacred, others the owl, other the dog, a crab, a fish or some forest animal. Some killed and ate without scruple what others out of respect did not dare touch.¹⁷

Violette also describes how the various spirits had their own feast days; the ones for *aitu* who had authority over a large area were occasions of great celebration.¹⁸

Monfat, based on Violette's writings, talks of the widespread influence and power of *tapu*:

Whatever the case, these peoples attached a very high importance to the observation of *tabu*. All were involved: for the *atua* punished rigorously sacrilege, and confounded in his wrath, not only the culpable but also those who had declared the *tabu*, and those for whose benefit it had been established, be it the family, the village or the district.

Monfat then gives a critical but not necessarily hostile account of the social function of *tapu*:

One therefore cannot find blameworthy in itself the extension of *tabu*, from the religious domain, to that of social and political interests. If a chief, at the same time powerful, wise and vigilant, concerned about the future of his tribe, saw an uncontrolled and improvident consumption threatening to finish off the supplies of pork and fruit: he would put the *tabu* on foodstuffs, for the period which he would judge necessary; he would thus use, for the common good, the power which God only delegates to man to serve that end.

But that pride and selfishness are rarely lacking which turn power to the personal profit of those vested with it. So the *tabu* more than once became, in the hands of a chief, an instrument of service for his desires and his interests. Did he wish to drive from their house, from their fields, irksome neighbours? Then he put the *tabu* on their house and their fields. Did he desire to assure for himself the monopoly of a European ship lying at anchor in his territory? A *tabu* once laid down could drive away all those with whom he did not wish to share such a lucrative trade. Was he discontented with the captain and had he resolved to deprive him of all sorts of supplies? Then an absolute *tabu* would forbid access to the ship by all men of his tribe.¹⁹

The Violette-Monfat account of Samoan religion is not devoid of Catholic preconceptions and preoccupations (about their own and Samoan cultures). This is particularly true of Violette's treatment of the question of the Samoan supreme deity. It is noteworthy that, between 1847 and 1870, Violette shifted his ground regarding the Samoan chief deity. In 1847, while downgrading Tagaloa, he maintained that there was no supreme deity among the *aitu*; in 1870, he said that Nafanua was the supreme deity and one that had no beginning. The hint here is of an uncreated deity, along the lines of the Nicene Creed,²⁰ and we are entitled to ask whether something was read in here by Violette, especially when his comment of 1847 is borne in mind, where he says that the Samoans had 'no deity in the proper sense'. Violette's change of perception evident in 1870 might have been the result of greater perception of Samoan religion after some 23 years' residence in Samoa.

Neither Violette nor his informants, however, would have been free from the influence of Christian ideas. In Violette's case, this meant ideas of primitive monotheism and the idea that God can be known by the natural light of human reason — indeed, the latter idea was proclaimed a dogma of the Catholic Church by the

First Vatican Council in 1870, the very year that Violette's ideas on Samoan religion appeared in print.

The Violette-Monfat account of traditional Samoan religion of course stands out in its ascription of the role of supreme deity to (a male) Nafanua, rather than to Tagaloa. This is apparently a different tradition from that received by the Protestant missionaries, perhaps tapping Savai'i and/or Mata'afa traditions unknown to the Protestants.

The entree of *lotu pope* (Catholicism) into the world of *fa'a samoa* must be seen against the background of the introduction of Christianity into Samoa. One of the most interesting questions for any mission historian is that of the reasons for the ready Samoan acceptance, at chiefly and commoner level, of the new religion. Some of the reasons might resemble those of later Melanesian cargo cults, ie., using the *lotu* as a means of getting hold of the newcomers' material wealth.

The impact and shock of *papalagi* contact, however, was also a social and spiritual one. These strangers from beyond the sky had literally burst open the enclosed universe in which the Samoans and their deities had lived.²¹ Catholic missionaries preserved this shamanistic version of the upset, as related by Violette.

When the Catholic religion ... was on the point of being preached in Samoa, the spirits warned the natives and they were going to withdraw.

'We pity you', said they to them: 'Now that the foreign spirits are coming, they will gain the upper hand over us, we can not drive them away. Your land is going to be changed from top to bottom, we shall not be able to continue our relations; we pity you falling into their power.'²²

So it was not just on the plane of political and material considerations that Samoans sought religious consolation, though

obviously the powerful and wealthy strangers must have powerful and beneficent deities. They also saw a need to change the spiritual and cosmic order to suit the new circumstances. Linked to this would have been a perception that the traditional religious beliefs and practices were so devalued that they had to be replaced by new ones capable of providing the requisite support and sanctions for *fa'a samoa* and the Samoan social order in the new age.

There was already discernible Samoan interest in Christianity by 1830, and this seems to have been due largely to existing links with Tonga.²³ The 1830s also saw the rise of cults in Samoa, which sought to put the ideas and practices of the new religion in a form assimilable to *fa'a samoa*. An early example was the cult called *siovili*, reputedly after its founder, a returned Samoan sailor of that name. *Siovili's* successor as head of the cult was, according to one account, a woman, who used spirit possession to get in contact with the new god. Similar cults grew up at the instigation of visiting or resident European sailors.²⁴

Monfat mentions *siovili's* cult and ascribes trickery to its originator. He gives an estimate based on information from Fathers Violette and Padel that the cult had 5,000 to 6,000 adherents at its height. He says that *siovili* spoke favourably of the coming of the French and their priests. The origin of the name *siovili* is ascribed to the cult's founder, who was said to have voyaged with the French naval explorer Dumont d'Urville.²⁵ It is also related by Monfat that this cult led to fervent — and cruelly disappointed — expectations of the Second Coming and the Last Day in the manner of millennial sects elsewhere.²⁶

When John Williams of the London Missionary Society (LMS) arrived in Samoa in 1830, he soon obtained the patronage of Malietoa Vainu'upo for *lotu taiti*, the LMS/Congregationalist version of Christianity.²⁷ Tongan connections with Samoa were still strong, however, and could use rival chiefly networks to further the introduction of Methodism (*lotu tonga*) into Samoa.²⁸

When *lotu pope*, Catholicism, arrived in 1845, it entered a situation in which dissidents and rivals in opposition to the Malietoa-*lotu taiti* alliance supported *lotu tonga* or *siovili* and other locally created cults. Eventually, *lotu tonga* and *lotu pope* were to divide the *siovilans* and other cultists between them and remain as separate traditions from the *lotu taiti*, patronised by the Malietoa interest.

The Catholic Mission came to Samoa from Wallis and Futuna. Interest in Samoa among the missionaries on Wallis and Futuna dated back to 1839, when the future martyr, Pierre Chanel, displayed a fervent desire to establish a mission in Samoa.²⁹ Bishop Pierre Bataillon, however, was cautious at first, despite more than one invitation from visiting Samoans to send missionaries to their country.³⁰ What might have been a deciding factor for Bataillon was his acquisition of the schooner *Étoile de la Mer* as a bequest from an English convert in Wallis, John Jones. The company of a visiting French frigate helped outfit the schooner for sea, and she was ready to sail to Samoa in 1845 under the command of a devoted and pious Norman captain.

The *Étoile de la Mer* had on board two Marist priests, Father Gilbert Roudaire and Father Théodore Violette (whose accounts of Samoan religion have already been cited), the Marist Brother Jacques Peloux and two Samoans from Savai'i, baptised in Wallis under the names Constantin and Joachim, along with their wives. Constantin and Joachim now wished to share their new *lotu* with their compatriots.³¹

The voyage took longer than expected due to adverse weather and, when the missionaries arrived in Savai'i, the first port of call was Falealupo; here, a Wallisian called Fuluipoako held chiefly rank, and was, moreover, related to Amelia, the Wallisian wife of the convert Constantin. Despite this apparent entree, the Marists, by their own accounts, met a suspicion and hostility inspired by Protestant opposition and found themselves on the receiving end of strong Protestant calumnies.

The popes were wicked and terrible men, sensual, proud, bloodthirsty, hypocritical, who preceded the huge French warships, bristling with canons, before which all resistance was impossible.³²

The Fathers, however, were amply aided by the two Samoans who accompanied them and who now acted as catechists. Joachim set out for his native village, Lealatele, and the result of his efforts was to open up a promising opportunity for the missionaries.

A great *fono* was held, where, after some speeches that Joachim assures us were magnificent, it was decided to send to the *Étoile de la Mer* a deputation of notables to urge us not to go elsewhere, but to remain at Lealetele.³³

The priests set out for Lealetele, where they were welcomed by the leading chief, Tuala, who, despite strong Protestant pressure, adhered stubbornly to his chosen *lotu*. Sixty others of his clan followed his lead. So on September 15, 1845, mass was celebrated for the first time in Samoa.³⁴

Greatly encouraged, the two missionaries now prepared to depart for Safotulafai, on the express instructions of their bishop, Bataillon, who seems to have gained some understanding of Safotulafai's importance from his Samoan contacts. It was a centre for the high-ranking *tulafale* (orator chiefs) who had the authority to bestow major chiefly titles. There were, moreover, major Malietoa links with the political division of which Safotulafai functioned as capital.³⁵ The Malietoa were, of course, the patrons of the London Missionary Society. It is not surprising therefore that at Safotulafai the Marists met with strong opposition, which they naturally ascribed to the machinations of the Protestants. Eventually, it was made clear to them that any disembarkation of their effects from the schooner would be opposed by force.³⁶

Nevertheless, at nearby Salevalou, a chief called Sua by the missionaries initially put himself forward as their patron. He had so far remained pagan in the face of Protestant pressures. He is

described as old, which could be one reason for his religious conservatism, although political rivalry cannot be ruled out. Sua, however, was soon swayed by intense pressure from the Protestant *fono* of Safotulafai (which ‘deliberated night and day’) and decided to be neither Catholic nor Protestant but remain pagan.³⁷

Sua’s brother, Moe, also resistant to the LMS, then resolutely took over as the missionaries’ new patron:

Former priest of the *aitu*, he had abjured their service to enrol in the sect of the Methodists. But the indecisions went down badly with his alert and resolute spirit. It pleased him to make proof of character, by declaring himself for those whom his brother was delivering up to the hypocrisy of their enemies and to the mercy of new adventures.³⁸

Moe had prestige and a firm character. Though remonstrations and threats were employed to dissuade him from *lotu pope* he remained firm and missionary accounts indicate that thenceforth he remained staunchly Catholic.³⁹ He illustrates that a potential source for Catholic converts were those who, for various reasons, would not adhere to *lotu taiti* — the LMS. Moe and his brother also appear to have some connection with the chief Latu Mai Lagi, who was of Tongan extraction. Tongan connections (and/or patronage networks) would help account for their dissidence from the LMS — and it should be noted that Moe was probably initially an adherent of *lotu tonga* or Methodism.

Now sure of two Catholic bases on Savai‘i, the two fathers set out for Apia, which they reached on October 29, 1845. There they received the same rejection they had often received in Savai‘i — which they also ascribed to the hostile influence of the Protestant clergy. There was a false dawn when they received a welcoming deputation from the chiefs of the Faleata district, under Fa‘aumina, who were residing on the Mulinu‘u Peninsula in Apia Harbour. They had been influenced in favour of Catholicism by

some Wallisian converts who were living among them. After an initial welcome, however, Protestant hostility apparently prevailed once again, and the priests were forcefully warned from coming ashore to celebrate mass.⁴⁰

It was at this point, however, that the fathers were able to obtain the protection and patronage of the leading chief, Mata'afa Fagamanu. On the demise of Malietoa Vainu'upo in 1841, Mata'afa Fagamanu, who was of the prestigious Sa Tupua lineage, received the leading Tui Atua chiefly title as a bequest from Malietoa. Mata'afa seems to have enrolled as an adherent of *lotu tonga*, or Methodism (as well as being a *siovili* adherent at one stage), but, as the Catholic missionaries put it: 'He had accepted the religion of the *misi* [the Protestant missionary], but had not submitted to his yoke.'⁴¹

Mata'afa also had the obligation of repaying aid and shelter given him some years previously by King Lavelua of Wallis, when Mata'afa had been shipwrecked on that island. Lavelua, who had since become an adherent of *lotu pope*, had written a strong letter recommending the Catholics to Mata'afa's protection. Through the mediation of Constantin, their Samoan companion from Wallis, the missionaries gained shelter and protection from Mata'afa, who rebuffed forcefully the efforts of the Protestant clergy to induce him to change his mind.⁴² After this introduction, Roudaire had many conversations with Mata'afa, who began to incline towards Catholicism. The chief showed the priest many signs of his favour. He hesitated at first, however, to embrace Catholicism, explaining his reluctance to Roudaire in the following terms:

It was I, myself, who in order to resist the chiefs of the western district, caused the ministers from Tonga to come here. I will be reproached with being inconstant; that is an insult for a great chief. Little by little, the *misis* will all discredit themselves by their lies. Then I will be able, without harming my honour, to declare myself Catholic.⁴³

Eventually, despite pressure from their kin and neighbours, Mata'afa and another chief, Mana, in 1846 publicly adhered to *lotu pope*.

Lotu pope had thus gained entree into Samoa, although in the years to come, the mission, bereft of, among other things, logistical support, was to suffer many privations. Nor were relations always happy with a strange culture. Father Vachon wrote to Marist founder, Father Colin, in 1849:

It is more than four years ago that the mission was founded in the Navigators [Samoa], and it is still insubstantial. The missionaries wear themselves out; if at least they sanctify themselves. And in every way we depend on the arbitrariness of the chiefs, who can take away from us every means of living and let us die of famine, or drive us out of the islands.⁴⁴

Chiefly patronage certainly played a major part in the reception of Catholicism in Samoa. Yet the early chiefly patrons were political and religious dissidents. Their motives for protecting and accepting *lotu pope* were, of course, mixed. Yet beyond considerations of chiefly power politics, it can be surmised that Catholicism had a promising entree into the world of *fa'a samoa*. *Lotu pope* could offer a fresh version of the new religion. Its foreign patrons were powerful, and French missionaries were perennially sensitive to any slights against France's position in the world. It could claim, in *papalagi* and Samoan senses, a superior title to that of its rivals. It offered impressive ritual, allowed the invocation of sub-deities, if the Triune God were to be equated with *atua* and the many saints (and angels) that Catholics were free to invoke were to be equated with *aitu*. It could commemorate/placate *aitu* of the deceased through masses for the dead. Catholicism, moreover, was to prove more lenient on customs such as tattooing (although strongly proclaiming its stricter stance on marriage and divorce). Its hierarchical structure also sat more easily with chiefly prestige and dominance.

Motives for choosing *lotu pope* were indeed mixed, but the quest for a renewed idea and experience of God in the new universe into which *fā'a samoa* was thrust played a significant part in converts' choice of Catholicism as their new *lotu*. Their choice came against the background of the encounter of two hitherto very separate traditions. On one side of the world was an archipelago, peopled originally by deliberate or drifting immigrants. Their descendants had a well-organised polity of custom and hierarchy. Their religion was one of gods and spirits, personifying nature's forces, but even more so the forces of the human psyche as it expressed itself in and was affected by the bonds of all-embracing — and surely constricting — family bonds. Then this web-like world was penetrated by strangers from the other side of the world.

One set of strangers, the French, had broken the strands of the web of their polity and their custom, for both had been challenged by new ideas and new social and economic forces and at times the adverse audit of war. After 1789, the mixed cultural, socio-economic and military crisis had involved the French in radical changes, terror, tyranny, military conquests and then defeat, until attempts were made to repair the torn strands of the web of custom and society. The paradox was that France from then on remained conservative in its hinterland but was governed from a Paris liable to capture by changeable regimes invoking varying dynastic or revolutionary symbolisms, or by radical politicians. For all that, the French, from the western end of the great Eurasian landmass, were sharers in the traditions of the Graeco-Roman and Judaic ecumene, who brought their *lotu* with them to the islands.

Lotu pope itself was a web harking back to the Apostles and backing up their authority and the authority of Revelation they proclaimed by Aristotelean reasoning and Roman law. Indeed Hobbes was not entirely inaccurate, nor entirely denigrating it, when he described it as the ghost of the Roman Empire sitting crowned on the grave thereof. The Church too had been challenged

and continued to be so by new ideas and new forces. Now the French strangers from the Eurasian ecumene and their *lotu* were repairing or holding fast to their webs and extending them to those islands whose own webs had been so penetrated by the outside world.

In the process, European religious and secular rivalries were let loose in *fa'a samoa*, to link up with traditional Samoan ones. Indeed, it is entirely probable that the customary internecine politicking of Samoan society received a fillip from the encounter with the *papalagi* world. For it was now needful in the Samoan polity to align groups in order to tap most expediently the strangers' benefits — material and spiritual — in a time of change and turmoil.

For all that, the missionaries kept their universalist spiritual mission to the fore, and it never was totally entangled in the throes of culture crisis or the webs of Samoan or *papalagi* politics. For all the fervent Frenchness of the first missionaries, their main message by precept and practice was one of universalism and the unity of the human race, and *lotu pope* was kept from being too French, or too Mata'afa, by its universality — that of a world religion encapsulated in a universal church. Perhaps this sense of visible universality was one of the mission's best gifts to Samoa, one that might outlast the insular demands of resurgent nationalism. This gift was indeed a valuable one for a Samoa, which, then and now, has found insularity no defence against the world that broke the sky.

Footnotes

- 1 A. Monfat, *Les Premiers Missionnaires des Samoa* (Lyon, 1923), p. 134.
The translations are mine.
- 2 John B. Stair, *Old Samoa, or Flotsam and Jetsam from the Pacific Ocean* (London 1897, reprint Papakura, NZ, 1983), p. 211.
- 3 Stair, *Old Samoa*, Chapter IX; George Turner, *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before* (London, 1884, reprint USP, Suva, 1984) Chapters IV–V; Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva, 1987), p. 35.
- 4 Turner, *Samoa*, p. 52.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40; see Schmidt, this volume.
- 6 Meleisea, *Lagaga*, pp. 56–8; see Reilly, this volume for a discussion of similar issues in Mangaia.
- 7 Théodore Violette, *Diary* (Rome, March 28, 1847).
- 8 Théodore Violette, ‘Notes d’un Missionnaire sur l’Archipel de [sic] Samoa’, *Les Missions Catholiques*, III (1870), p. 102.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 111.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 112.
- 11 Violette, ‘Notes d’un Missionnaire’, p. 103. The raising of terraces mentioned might refer to the raising of star mounds and other similar constructions. Even more interesting is the description of the abode of the dead as a place ‘where no master at all is recognised, where everyone gives orders’. This would seem to illustrate the basic demand of *fa’a samoa* for hierarchical order and the role of Samoan religion as a sanction for it. See Herda, this volume, for a discussion of similar issues in Tonga.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 111.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 Turner, *Samoa*, pp. 39–40.
- 15 Stair, *Old Samoa*, p. 223.
- 16 Violette, ‘Notes d’un Missionnaire’, p. 103.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 111.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 Monfat, *Les Premiers*, p. 139.
- 20 In Catholic doctrine, the Creator is necessarily an uncreated being as opposed to a subordinate created being. This was the teaching of the Council of Nicea in 325, which issued the Nicene Creed, in which Jesus is described as ‘begotten not made’ (ie., uncreated), thus affirming His complete sharing of the godhead with the Creator.
- 21 Meleisea, *Lagaga*, p. 42.
- 22 Monfat, *Les Premiers*, p. 137.

- 23 Meleisea, *Lagaga*, p. 52; John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Beginnings in Oceania*, (Suva, 1982), p. 122.
- 24 Meleisea, *Lagaga*, p. 52; Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, pp. 85, 121–2.
- 25 Monfat, *Les Premiers*, 146–7.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- 27 Meleisea, *Lagaga*, pp. 56–7. Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, pp. 121–22.
- 28 Niel Gunson, ‘The Tonga-Samoa Connection 1777–1845’, *Journal of Pacific History*, 25 (1990), pp. 176–87; Meleisea, *Lagaga*, pp. 60–2; Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, p. 122.
- 29 Monfat, *Les Premiers*, p. 178.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 *Ibid.*, pp. 182–3.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 188.
- 33 Letter from Violette, December 1845, Marist Archives.
- 34 Monfat, *Les Premiers*, pp. 200–2.
- 35 See Turner, *Samoa*, pp. 252–5.
- 36 Monfat, *Les Premiers*, p. 204.
- 37 *Ibid.*, pp. 206–7.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 206.
- 39 *Ibid.*, pp. 206–07.
- 40 *Ibid.*, pp. 212–14.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 218.
- 42 Letter from Roudaire, December 1845, Marist Archives.
- 43 Monfat, *Les Premiers*, p. 218.
- 44 Fr Vachon to Rev. Fr Colin, November 20, 1849; Monfat, *Les Premiers*, p. 265.

‘Te ‘Orama a Numangatini’

(“The Dream of Numangatini”)

and the Reception of Christianity on Mangaia

Michael Reilly

On the island of Mangaia in the southern Cook Group, sometime during the third quarter of the 19th century, the ageing *ariki* or titular ruler, Numangatini, related two dreams concerning the second and successful reception of the Christian mission in 1824. These dreams, carrying the explanatory title *Te ‘Orama Numangatini ‘au te tuatua na te Atua i tae mai ai i Mangaia* (“The dream of Numangatini’s reign telling of the God which arrived in Mangaia”), form part of a collection of papers donated to the Polynesian Society in New Zealand in 1907 by the descendants of the Reverend Dr Wyatt Gill, a celebrated ethnographer and member of the London Missionary Society, who had lived in Mangaia between 1852 and 1872.¹ When I first read the dreams, I was not sure how to relate them to a history of Mangaia. While Gill referred to some of its incidents in his published account

of the reception of Christianity, he nowhere mentioned Numangatini experiencing dreams about the missionaries.² Perhaps he, too, feared the scandal of basing his empirically researched history on the visionary experiences of dream texts?

The content of any dream can seem strange or incongruous, liable to extraordinary distortions and narrative transformations, which would be considered impossible, absurd or grotesque by our conscious minds. When combined with culturally specific references, a dream, such as those experienced by Numangatini, might seem doubly strange to an outsider. The very strangeness of these dreams and the challenge of understanding them as historically and culturally significant texts forms the basis of this chapter. As in any dream interpretation, I shall begin by retelling in English what is recorded about Numangatini's visions. This will allow you, the reader, to experience as much as possible the narrative as I first encountered it. I will then re-enact the process of my reading, focusing, in particular, on the cultural explication of references that might have seemed commonplace to Numangatini and his generation but are no longer known, even among younger generations of Manganians. Lastly, I will draw out the wider implications of this text in order that the reader can better appreciate the narrative's significance within the island's history.

Numangatini's dream narrative begins by recounting, in the third person, how he experienced the first dream while he was asleep at 'Aka'oro.³ He saw himself walking inland to the priest's house where the Great Council was meeting. He sat on a stone in the building's courtyard. The council spoke to him about the talk of the land but he remained silent. A voice called out to him, 'O Ariki, climb up here to me.' Looking up into a coconut tree, he beheld a white person standing there. (From this point in the narrative, Numangatini shifts to the first person.) He ignored the person's call. After the person addressed him again, Numangatini got up and climbed the tree and they sat there awhile. The person

again spoke: 'We should sever your head.' Numangatini protested: his head was sacred (*tapu*). The person replied that it was not: 'We will join the head.' He continued that the god, Jehovah, was in the heavens. Looking up, Numangatini saw that the skies were bright red. The person continued: 'Jehovah is the *atua*, Jehovah is the *atua* in the heavens.' With that, Numangatini's head was severed. The person then announced that they should fly, with Numangatini going in front. He was doubtful, but after the person called out that they should fly once more, they did; they alighted on the *utu* tree of Tangaroa at Okio. The person then told him to turn his eyes towards the sea. Numangatini saw it was as completely white as the stones from up and down the Orongo *marae*.⁴ The person told him that this was his city where he would live with the word of God forever and ever. The person laid his hand on his head, kissing (*'ongi*) the right side of his forehead and said, 'We shall go.' Then he vanished; Numangatini awoke and realised it was a dream.

Numangatini had a second dream another day at Tava'enga where he was sleeping in a house at Atiu Marama. He saw a large ship at 'Atuokoro and went to look. On reaching the shore at Orongo, he saw two people come ashore at Avarua. He took hold of their hands and led them to Kei'a. He, Metuaviivi, Tavare and Manga'ati arrived at Vaitirota; they did not quite get to Kei'a. He awoke, dropping his hand from the men. Metuaviivi and the others came along to Kei'a. He sprang up from that dream and called out to Metuauti: 'I slept tonight.' Metuauti asked him what he did in his sleep. Numangatini replied that a boat came ashore at 'Atuokoro; that he had seen two men and had led them to Kei'a with Metuaviivi, Tavare and Manga'ati. When it became light, Numangatini told three children to go up the mountain and see whether a ship was ashore at 'Atuokoro. They shouted back: 'A small thing; it has not come ashore.'⁵ Numangatini told Metuauti to accompany him up the mountain to look at the boat. They beheld a large ship and proceeded to Kei'a to get some garlands

(*tanga 'ei*).⁶ Many people were inquiring, 'Where is the boat?' Numangatini and Metuauti explained that it was ashore at 'Atuokoro. In the evening, the Great Council gathered in the priest's house at Kei'a, which Numangatini had seen in the first dream. There the discussions concerned the bad spirits. Metuaviivi told Numangatini that he should go to the shore and look at the boat. At dawn, he went to the shore at Orongo. Davida came ashore at Taingakoro. Numangatini and other people went to fetch him; they walked along the reef. Ti'are went round by sea and landed his canoe at Avarua. Numangatini led the two missionaries.⁷ The text, as we have it, stops here.

On reflection, part of the difficulty I encountered in accepting the status of this text arose from the resistance of Western rationalistic thought to treating dreams as historical documents: they are more commonly left for therapeutic practices such as psychoanalysis.⁸ By contrast, Polynesian cultures have a far less problematic attitude.⁹ In pre-contact times, all Islanders took the content of dreams seriously since these were regarded as the 'manifestations of the gods'.¹⁰ To express the New Zealand Maori understanding of it: 'The dream is real, but moves on another plane than that of everyday life.'¹¹ Information or instructions given in dreams were heeded and plans might be drastically altered, as Gill observed of the Cook Islands: 'Some of the most important events in their national history were determined by dreams.'¹² Visions were experienced by a dream-spirit, in *Mangaia a vaerua*, of a sleeping person, which could travel about and in every way act as a real being. A dream, when it was recounted, took the form of a narrative with attention to detail (including clear statements that it was a dream) and incorporated sections of dialogue. Much attention was given to the correct interpretation of dream images. Numangatini's dreams clearly fit into this kind of narrative.

What do these dreams signify? In order to understand the content of Numangatini's narrative, I followed the example of

Polynesian specialists and Western psychoanalysts attempted to interpret the *ariki's* dreams. His story is filled with references to Mangaian people and placenames, some of which can be identified. The first individual is Numangatini himself. In 1824, he was the *ariki pa uta* (the inland *ariki*). This was the highest religious office on the island; its holders all descended from the three *kopu* (sub-tribes) of Ngariki. Numangatini appears to have descended from the Te 'Akatauirā *kopu* who succeeded to the second ranking office of *ariki pa tai* (seaward *ariki*). He was translated to the higher office after a political dispute between the former incumbent and Pangemiro, the *mangaia* or highest political leader.¹³ The *ariki* were responsible for the various rituals required for state occasions, including the inauguration of the *mangaia*. They were also responsible for the psychic defences of the island against threatening supernatural beings, the *tuarangi*.¹⁴

Information regarding the figures mentioned in the second dream is more fragmentary.¹⁵ At the time of the dream, Metuaviivi (also known as Mura'a'i), of the Ngati Tane tribe, appears to have been the *pava* or district chief of Kei'a, one of the six *puna* or districts of Mangaia: Kei'a was considered the most sacred, being the location of the island's most important ritual sites. The Tavare in the dream is most likely the brother of Raoa, who had died in battle a couple of years previously. Both brothers were descended from Ngati Mana'une. In 1824, Tavare might have been holding his brother's title as a *kairanga nuku* or subdistrict chief, in Kei'a. Maunga'ati, a chief of Ngati Tane, is acknowledged by all sources to have been a close ally of Numangatini. At this time, he had probably succeeded his late brother, Arokapiti, as a *kairanga nuku* in Veitatei, a neighbouring *puna* or district to the south of Kei'a. Metuauti was another *kairanga nuku* in Kei'a. Davida and Ti'are were the two missionaries from Taha'a who ventured ashore in 1824. Judging from these identifications, the two evangelists for the London Missionary Society were met by the principal *ariki* or

religious leader of the island, accompanied by some of the chiefs who had authority over the local land.

Some of the places mentioned in the dream narrative can be located within the historical space as it existed in 1824. Three *puna* or districts are mentioned: Kei'a, Veitatei and Tava'enga, the *puna* to the north of Kei'a. Atiu Marama, where Numangatini had a house in Tava'enga, was most likely a locality in the *tapere* or subdistrict that came under his authority as a *kairanga nuku*.¹⁶ Several *marae*, or ritual sites, are mentioned: 'Aka'oro, where Numangatini was sleeping in a house, was the national *marae* of the *ariki pa uta* in Kei'a. His walk to the priest's house for the council meeting might have referred to Te Kaiara, the national godhouse, opposite Ara'ata, the tribal *marae* of Ngariki. Neither structure was far from 'Aka'oro.¹⁷ Together they formed one of the most sacred areas in Mangaia: an appropriate place for important meetings of the island's chiefs and priests.

Two other ritually important sites are referred to by Numangatini. One was the *marae*, Orongo, the *marae* of Rongo — the principal *atua* or god of Mangaia — located on the western coastline of Mangaia. This was an unusual site since most Mangaians, before the arrival of Christianity, lived round the taro plantations on the inner side of the *makatea*, the high limestone cliffs that separated this inhabited area from the surrounding reef and sea. Only refugees, misfits and strangers lived round the latter area. The siting of Orongo had been subject to change. Originally, it had been sited at the *marae* of Ivanui next to the inner side of the *makatea* in the eastern *puna* of Ivirua, but it was moved west on account of the heat. This new location had a number of associations with the gods and the otherworld or 'Avaiki, where Rongo resided. Motoro, the *atua* of the Ngariki, had arrived on the western shore of Mangaia while the dead or *tuarangi* always left from there for 'Avaiki. This might have made the relocation ritualistically more sensible. Te Rangi Hiroa believed this consolidation of important ritual sites reflected the settlement of

the Ngariki in Kei`a. Orongo was the *marae* and residence of the *ariki pa tai*. Numangatini, while serving in that position, appears to have lived there.¹⁸ The second reference to *te utu o Tangaroa* (Tangaroa's *Barringtonia speciosa*, a tree) at Okio — a location in the interior of Kei`a below the inner *makatea* cliff — might have referred to the trees on Tangaroa's sole *marae*, where he received first fruits in honour of his status as the supplanted and exiled *tuakana*, or elder brother of Rongo.¹⁹ The final two placenames are located on Mangaia's western reef. The first, 'Atuokoro, is situated in Tava'enga; the second, Avarua, lay further round the coast. Both served as landings for small canoes.²⁰ A Mangaian proverb associated Avarua with the *marae* of Rongo: '*Ka ta te io ia Rongo, ka raukape [i] Avarua*' (Gill: 'Thy umbilical cord was devoted to Rongo. Thy god is at Avarua'; or, 'My god is Rongo whose house is at Avarua').²¹ This saying might hint at why Orongo was relocated to the west coast: the *marae* and the *ariki pa tai* might have been warding off threatening external forces that landed at Avarua.

One of the stranger sections of the dream narrative recounts Numangatini being roused from his silence at the council meeting by a voice addressing him, it transpires, from a coconut tree. (I should point out that Numangatini's name has links with this tree: in English, his name can be rendered as 'The many branching coconut tree'.)²² The tree referred to in the dream might have been the *tapu* coconut tree growing on the Ara'ata *marae*. Gill explained that it was 'of a rare yellow kind'. The colour is important since it was associated with Mоторо, whose *marae* this was, as well as with other gods.²³ The man calling from the tree was white (*tangata teatea*): in the dream, Numangatini added that he was as pale as a European. The reference to *teatea* and the comparison with a European will become important later on; for now, I will simply point out that both had associations with Tangaroa.²⁴

The next important segment occurs after Numangatini has climbed the tree: the pale person proposed cutting his head off.

Numangatini based his objection on his head's sacredness: he was emphasising his *tapu* status as an *ariki*. The white man argued that, on the contrary, their heads would be joined. This proposal was connected with the existence of the Christian Jehovah in the heavens, or the *rangi*. This connection seems to emphasise the linkage being established between Numangatini, the white man and Jehovah. Only when this assertion seemed proven to Numangatini by the sky's chiefly and sacred redness did the *ariki* consent to the deed. The severing was preceded by what appears to be a ritual incantation or *karakia* ('Jehovah is the *atua*, Jehovah is the *atua* in the heavens').

What does the cutting of the head signify? The evidence suggests that the episode can be best understood as a form of ritual desanctification: Numangatini, the *ariki*, is being transformed into a follower of the Christian Jehovah. The transformation of religious states in Polynesia was marked by such symbolic actions. A Manganian man who sought conversion immediately asked to have his long hair cut. The famous LMS missionary, John Williams, recorded that, 'When speaking of any person having renounced idolatry, the current expression was, "Such an one has cut his hair".'²⁵ The connection between the ritual cutting of hair and Numangatini's ritual cutting of the head is clarified in New Zealand Maori sources. Maori considered the head to be very *tapu*, while the hair of the head, as the part of the body with the most rapid growth, was considered the site of the *atua's* greatest activity and therefore of the greatest sacredness.²⁶ The hair and the head therefore possess the same ritual meaning.

The choice of the head is not altogether surprising in the wider Polynesian ethnographic context. The head of an enemy might be cut off in order to degrade the victim — to negate their *tapu* status — and render them *noa* or not *tapu*.²⁷ Other traditions recount the severing of a head belonging to a friend, leader, deity or sacrifice. In these cases, this act seems to be associated with the

notion of fertility; for example, the head of the eel-lover was considered the origin of the coconut tree.²⁸ Numangatini's stress on his sacred or divine status as an *ariki* recalls a similar connection with the land. According to Gill, the *ariki* descended, on their mother's side, from the common people — the people of the land; a common connection made in stories of the Polynesian Stranger King.²⁹ The link with land and fertility is made clearer when examining the third *ariki* title of Mangaia: the *ariki i te 'ua i te tapora kai*, or the *ariki no te tapora kai*, was responsible for maintaining the island's food supplies. He presided over the division of food at major feasts and the rituals for harvesting or declaring *ra 'ui*, or restrictions, over food stocks.³⁰ One titleholder, Namu, was actually slain and parts of his body were buried in different parts of the island.³¹ This procedure echoed the burial of parts of the human sacrifice, used in the ritual for inaugurating the reign of a *mangaia* or high chief, throughout the island to ensure its future fertility.³²

Once Numangatini had experienced the severing of his head, he was called on to fly from the coconut tree. Like him, I experienced initial doubts as to the sense of this proceeding. Yet, as with the head severing, I found that flight was not at all unusual in the traditions of various Polynesian islands. The spirit or *vaerua* of a sleeping person would fly about the world observing and meeting people before returning to the waking body.³³ In Manihiki, in the Cook Islands, a female healer was flown away by hostile spirits on a platform. She was eventually rescued by her spirit helper who flew her back to her village.³⁴ The great Polynesian trickster hero, Maui (as well as other Pacific Island ancestors), is frequently represented flying about islands or to the otherworld.³⁵ A number of these flights were assisted by birds. Maui himself is said to have flown in, on or been transformed into one of several bird species, most notably the *rupe* (pigeon) and the *torea* (golden plover).³⁶ Birds were often associated with other gods.

A story from Rarotonga recounted how two men, pursued by a giant lizard, called on their god and were answered by the arrival of 'an immense snow-white bird', which flew them away from harm.³⁷ Gill's important Mangaian associate, Mamae, a pastor, associated the high-flying *piraki* (or *pirake*, the white-tailed tropic bird) with human flight: 'So when called away from earth, may we all, like this famous bird, soar upwards to God and heaven.'³⁸ Gill collected another similar saying: '*Kua tupu te uru o te manu, ka rere!* (Gill: 'The feathers of the bird are grown! It [the spirit] is about to take its flight.')³⁹ Mamae's apparent usage of Christian imagery, when situated within this body of flight traditions, is dissolved into a narrative at least strongly influenced by pre-existing beliefs.

The last section of the first dream requires several briefer observations. The reference to the seaward *oire* or town, a biblical neologism, probably alluded to the initial Christian settlement on the island: according to Gill, it was called 'God's town'.⁴⁰ This new town presumably supplanted the Orongo *marae*, reinforcing the transformational theme of the head cutting. The laying on of hands seems to echo Christian practices, down to the similarity of expression: compare the passage from Mark 8: 33, '*kua tuku iora i tona rima*', to Numangatini's expression, '*kua tuku iora aia i tona rima*'. A further Christian reference is found in the passage '*te tuatua na te Atua*' used to refer to the word of God or the Gospel.⁴¹ The kiss or *ongi* applied to the forehead might have referred to a form of customary farewell, since the forehead, in Polynesian traditions, was (like the rest of the head) treated as sacred.⁴²

The second dream is straightforward, apart from the reference to the evil spirits (*varua kino*) which in this context referred to the missionaries. What did the Great Council of Chiefs mean by this comment? The term alludes to an important category of supernatural being, the *tuarangi*: *vaerua* (or *varua*) *kino* is a synonymous term, as other Mangaian narratives make plain.⁴³ Simply put, the missionaries were, like the *tuarangi*, perceived as

potentially threatening beings from another world. This perception explains the chiefs' decision to request their principal *ariki*, responsible for the island's psychic defences, to receive these beings.

Gill's narration takes the dream further. Numangatini took the men's hands and led them onto the Orongo *marae*, where they underwent a ritual incorporation into Mangaian society.⁴⁴ (While reading the dream narrative, Teariki No'oroa recollected his father, Nga Animara Moeke No'oroa, telling him that Numangatini received the missionaries at Vairoronga, a spring, a few minutes' walk from Avarua: Gill spelt it Vairorongo ['Rongo's sacred stream']; it issued out of the stones at Orongo and was used only for bathing — ritual sanctification and descantification — by priests and *ariki*.)⁴⁵ It seems likely that the missionaries bathed in this spring while at Orongo.⁴⁶ Te Rangi Hiroa quotes a song referring to the *tapu* of Mоторо being washed off in Vairorongo. Perhaps a similar requirement was demanded of the missionaries, who had, after all, landed on Mоторо's coastline?⁴⁷

Numangatini later took them to his interior residence, located on the 'Aka'oro *marae*, where the men appear to have been confined for several days until released by Numangatini.⁴⁸ This reception on Orongo and 'Aka'oro suggests a link with human sacrifices used to inaugurate the rule of a new *mangaia*: such sacrifices or *ika* were transported in the reverse direction. A missionary later recorded the understanding that Davida and Ti'are had of the event, which confirms the connection. Davida and Ti'are believed they had been 'confined by command of the king in the house of one of the false divinities of Man[g]aia'. They saw this as a way of making them *tapu* 'and the property of the god, to which, if the priest required, they might be at any instant sacrificed'.⁴⁹ The first resident European missionary on Mangaia, George Gill, reported that the confinement was ordered by command of 'the deity' — presumably Rongo, through his medium, Numangatini.⁵⁰ Three days later, they were released on Numangatini's orders. He then

provided them with land, extended them his protection (a traditional role for a chief) and allowed them to preach. The men — and the church they founded — continue to be described as *'tama 'u'a a Numangatini'* ('children [of the] lap of Numangatini'), a reference to their adoption.⁵¹

The second dream takes on a greater significance when it is read in the light of the first vision. The first dream tells how Numangatini, the *ariki*, accepted the authority of the *atua*, Jehovah. The second dream is the logical outcome. In this vision, Numangatini related how he welcomed the two missionaries from Taha'a and received them into Mangaian society on the *marae* of Orongo and 'Aka'oro: the two most important ritual sites on the island. In subsequent years, he acted as the 'defender of the faith' (Mangaian called him the *ariki no te 'au* ['the *ariki* of the peace']); he served as one of the key chiefly protectors of the new mission.⁵² Later, he always took a leading part in meeting new missionaries, such as the Rarotongan, Maretu.⁵³ In an exhortation in 1870, he called on the chiefs to '[t]ake care of my missionary and the native pastors'.⁵⁴ As *ariki*, responsible in traditional Mangaian terms for the spiritual welfare of the island, he was, arguably, the best equipped to undertake this new role.

What other fragments of Mangaian pre-contact history predict the arrival of Christianity? Perhaps the most notable are prophecies of a new order. Predictions of the arrival of strangers, particularly Europeans, are recorded from a number of Polynesian islands.⁵⁵ One Mangaian prophecy was made by the older brother of Maunga'ati, Arokapiti. Besides being a leading warrior of Ngati Tane, he was descended from several *pi'a atua* or priests and mediums of Tane, his tribal *atua*. During a quarrel, he predicted: '*Kua pupu au i te tau* [Gill: *to'ou*] *atua, e kua momonono i roto i te kaa o mato, kare o'ou atua. Ka kimi koe, 'aore. Ka tiaki au i toku* [—?] *e tama 'ou* [*ia?*] *te aka o te rangi*' (Gill: 'I have collected all your idols [and] hidden them in the holes of the rocks. You have no gods at

all. Seek as you may, it will be in vain. As for me I wait for a “new King” who shall come from the edge of the horizon’).⁵⁶ A Manganian chief explained that this saying was uttered during a lot of fighting in Veitatei. Arokapiti, a local *kairanga nuku*, made this prophecy in an attempt to re-establish peace. (Even today, Manganian chiefs are meant to adjudicate and conciliate in disputes.)⁵⁷ Gill interpreted this utterance as an unconscious expression of the future coming of Christianity and noted that Manganians in his day referred to Jesus as the ‘New King’ (*‘Tama ‘ou’*). He also observed that this was not the only prophecy regarding Christianity made on the island.⁵⁸ Present-day Manganian elders consider that different tribes made their own prophecies in a kind of competition.⁵⁹ One of them was made by the *pi‘a atua* or priest of Ngati Tane, Pangeivi or Erika‘a, who announced that ‘God from heaven [*rangi*] is coming to Mangaia; he is already at the horizon [*tuarangi*]’. A descendant from a priestly family quoted the following prophetic lines to me:

Na kona ra, korua, e ‘aku ariki
Karo ake, Paeroa, ‘ia manu
Vaevae keke, ka ‘aere
E ‘aere maira taku atua
Na te aka o te rangi
Mei te kaokao rau aika te tu.

So be it, you (two), o my *ariki*
 Look out for Paeroa, (who will) become a bird (and fly away)
 Strangers’ feet will be walking
 My *atua* is coming
 From the *aka o te rangi*
 In appearance, like the furled centre rib of a young banana leaf.

These sayings might have arisen from the tensions being experienced in Mangaia at this time, in the years immediately before the missionaries arrived. The reign of the new *mangaia* had not been satisfactorily inaugurated, and with that inauguration

would come political order and stability. In such a politically fraught situation, where, at any moment, the chief most likely to become *mangaia* could be challenged for that office by other chiefly aspirants to the title, men and women turned to prophesying a new order. The arrival of Christianity at this precise moment must have given Mangaia greater reason to recollect these parts of their oral tradition.

Not only were predictions made about the coming of Christianity, but the early church on Mangaia continued, like Numangatini, to interpret the significance of the arrival of the new religion by using traditional references and symbolism. Gill wrote that the lack of an inauguration of the *mangaia* meant that Mangaia 'were thus expecting the inauguration of a new and prosperous era by a stranger, who should "pierce the solid blue vault" of heaven [*te aka o te rangi*']'. He added: 'They still love to call the Gospel "the true drum of peace beaten by King Jesus".'⁶⁰ The drum of peace, the *pa'u aka'au*, referred to the drum beaten to mark the completion of the inaugural ceremonies of the *mangaia*. By Gill's day, Mangaia had coined a favourite saying that the earlier generation was 'awaiting the arrival of the Gospel of the Prince of Peace, whose word and reign constitute the true drum of peace'. Nor were Mangaia the only ones to redeploy traditional terminology and beliefs. Gill performed his own transformations. He referred to Davida and Ti'are causing the Mangaia 'to hear the sweet melody' (referring to the *pa'u aka'au*) and to emerge from 'their hiding places into the peace, light, and freedom of Christianity' — a reference to the custom of remaining scarce until the inauguration of the *mangaia* was completed so that individuals were not caught for the sacrifice. He went even further, describing Jesus Christ as a willing victim to the 'divine altar' — a reference to the platform at 'Aka'oro where the sacrifice for the *mangaia* was laid.⁶¹ The theme of transformation established in the dreams by Numangatini can, therefore, be seen as part of a network of traditional

references that continued to be adapted and developed by the early church, including its resident European missionary. By this means, the new religion and its practitioners were accepted into Manganian society and, over the course of time, came to be seen as an extension, if not a continuation, of the earlier society, which they had, at first sight, overcome.

How does the dream narrative fit into the wider field of Manganian historical discourse? Several elements in Numangatini's narrative point beyond the confines of the text to other historical episodes in Mangania; all of them point towards connections with Tangaroa and what appear to be echoes of shamanistic practices. In the dream narrative, Numangatini refers to '*te utu o Tangaroa*'; to the whiteness, *teatea*, of the person in the coconut tree and the area where the new *oire* is to be established; and to the heavenly (*rangi*) domain of the *atua* Jehovah, whom he seems to be accepting. The Great Council also refers to the missionaries coming ashore at Avarua as *varua kino*: a synonym for the threatening *tuarangi*. All these references can be linked to the exiled *atua*, Tangaroa. The term *teatea* occurs in a sentence recorded by the Cook Islands lexicographer Stephen Savage: '*No te teatea o te pona e te re'ure'u, kua manako 'ia te 'etene e, e 'anau na Tangaroa.*' ('Because of the whiteness of the shirts and the loincloths, the heathens thought they were children of the god, Tangaroa.')⁶² Gill referred to this *atua* as having 'sandy hair', and added that, 'to this day a golden-haired child is invariably addressed ... as "the fair-haired progeny of Tangaroa"'.⁶³ The two terms, *rangi* (often translated as heavens or sky but also 'the ethereal space, the not-earth region') and *tuarangi* (referring to the 'sky sphere' or 'the horizon'),⁶⁴ are also closely connected with this absent *atua*. Gill recounted that Tangaroa was believed by Manganians to live 'in the sky, i.e. far beyond the horizon', which echoes exactly the meanings of *rangi* and *tuarangi*.⁶⁵ Not surprisingly, European visitors such as Cook were considered to be threatening *tuarangi*: this makes Numangatini's

comparison of the white man to a European or Papa'a more significant. The references to the *rangi* or horizon, in phrases such as 'te aka o te rangi', were also mentioned in prophecies by men such as Arokapiti. The notion of fresh eruptions from the *tuarangi* (the horizon) would probably not have been considered unusual since the island foods associated with Tangaroa were all seasonal crops: Manganians believed that these items travelled on to his domains.⁶⁶ This expectation of a new *atua* from the horizon was clearly part of the traditional perceptions of Manganians.

Other textual references suggest a link between Tangaroa and the new god, Jehovah, as implied by Numangatini's stress on the *rangi*. One day in the 1840s, Maretu, a Rarotongan missionary on Mangaia, had occasion to remonstrate with a non-believer:⁶⁷

One day I returned to Veitatei where a man named Aere lived with his two wives. He wanted nothing else but them. He knew nothing about God; and said he had no food but Jesus Tangaroa. 'Who told you that?' 'That is the information our ancestors left with us,' he replied.

The recorded early conversations between the first missionaries and the curious Manganians give an idea of how such linkages could come about:

'Where does your God live?' — 'In heaven.'

'What is His name?' — 'Jehovah.'

'Does your God eat food?' — 'God is a Spirit. He is not like us; He lives for ever. It was He that made the earth, the sky, and all things. He made us.' ...

They next inquired why they came to Mangaia. 'We come to make known to you the true God Jehovah, and His Son Jesus Our Saviour.'

Amongst other things Davida remarked that all who believe in Jesus will go to heaven (sky).⁶⁸

On first reading the dream narrative, I had difficulty comprehending the text's meaning. In my puzzlement, I spoke with Niel Gunson, who described the religious practice shamanism. He has argued for its early existence in Polynesian societies.⁶⁹ This makes sense of shamanistic references in the dreams. Like Numangatini, shamans experienced a call to their religious life in a dream. The candidate-shaman would often be approached by a divine or semi-divine being and told of his or her selection: the white man atop the coconut tree fits such a description. These divine beings instructed and guided the neophyte through the perils of acquiring his or her shamanic powers. This is a responsibility that the white person seems to fulfil in the dream. An important feature of a shaman's initiation was his or her own experience of death and resurrection through bodily dismemberment, including decapitation. Like Numangatini's experiences, shamanic initiations could feature magical flights and encounters with greater deities who imparted their knowledge. These neophytes were sometimes taken to the tree of life, associated with ideas of the world's fertility and perennality. A parallel might be Numangatini's flight to the *utu* tree of Tangaroa, which perhaps can be seen as an encounter with the higher deity, Jehovah-Tangaroa.⁷⁰

How extensive are shamanic references on Mangaia or other Cook Islands? Shamans are distinguished by ecstatic practices. Similarly, the *ariki*, as the *pi'a atua* or priests of Rongo, shared with other Mangaian priests the ability to become possessed by their *atua* and speak as the medium of the god.⁷¹ Another important feature of a shaman's technique was the ability to ascend to the heavens or descend to the underworld, usually to fetch back a departed soul. This was often accomplished by means of magical flight, either assisted by or in the form of a bird. Several Mangaian stories recount such journeys. Eneene took his god, Tumatarauua, and descended to 'Avaiki in order to fetch his wife back. She had fallen from a *pua* tree, used by the dead to descend to 'Avaiki.⁷² The

Mangaian culture hero, Ngaru, descended to 'Avaiki, where he defeated Miru, goddess of the dead, with the help of his divine grandparent, Moko. He later ascended to heaven and defeated the gods there.⁷³ Maui appears in Mangaian myths descending in the form of a *rupe* (pigeon) to 'Avaiki.⁷⁴

The shaman's ascent to the heavens has also been recollected in stories of kite-flying.⁷⁵ The connection is more explicit in Mangaia since they, like other Cook Islanders, referred to kites as *manu*, which also means animals such as birds; Mangaian kites were sometimes bird-shaped.⁷⁶ One story relates how Tane unsuccessfully challenged his *tuakana* Rongo at kite-flying: a lesser parallel to the earlier contest between Rongo and the older Tangaroa. A song about the contest alludes to the key term, *rangi*, often linked with Tangaroa: 'Na Rongo te vai ra / I te aka i te rangi' (Gill: 'Yes; twas Rongo's / Whose kite touched the edge of the sky').⁷⁷ In kite-flying contests, the first *manu* always had to be sacred to and named after Rongo;⁷⁸ presumably, this was intended to commemorate the victory against Tane. However, the reference to the *manu* flying up to (but not into) the *rangi*, the domain of Tangaroa, suggests kiteflying might have also recalled the critical contest between Rongo and Tangaroa and the subsequent recognition of the distant horizon (*rangi*) as the latter's dominion.

The use of the term *manu* for kite or bird in other islands of the Cook Group stresses the echoes of shamanic practices, which can be found outside Mangaia. One recently published story illustrates the extent of such shamanistic echoes. The story related the trauma that Nuinui of Manihiki experienced at the hands of spirit beings.⁷⁹ Nuinui herself was a *ta'unga*, a healer, who was assisted by a spirit, Mokara. She was able to call up this *vaerua* to enter her and give her energy on her travels. Her efficacy in the healing arts aroused the jealousy of other spirits so that one day they came and carried Nuinui away into the heavens on a whirlwind where she found herself on a platform. She was flown

around the island by these hostile spirits and endured various awful experiences and the threat of imminent death until rescued by Mokara, described as being a wind. Her family found her trembling body among the rocks. She was unable to eat or speak with anyone for three days and remained alone in her house. On the fourth day she was finally able, amid much weeping, to relate her story to her family. The narrative suggests that Nuinui, like the shaman, was a healer of the physical and psychic health of her community, protecting them from the designs of malevolent spirits. To do this required an involvement with spirits of the otherworld, which carried attendant risks, as Nuinui discovered. Like shamans, however, she was able to summon the aid of spirit helpers. Her traumatic return to the bosom of her family also recalls a shaman's slow re-entry into human life after an ecstatic journey into the beyond.

By re-enacting Numangatini's dream narrative, I have been able to evoke a wealth of local knowledge about the history of the island, its chiefly rulers and its *atua*; the significance of fertility, *tapu* and the head; the feats of flight by spirit bodies and divine beings; the local echoes of older shamanistic practices; and the role of prophecies in predicting the arrival of Christian missionaries. Numangatini's own vision of the reception of Christianity alerts us to the importance of vernacular terms such as *tuarangi* in distinguishing and understanding an Islander perspective of this historic transition. In the epiphanic experience of Jehovah, and in Gill's recollection and explanation of Mangaian understandings of the significance of Jesus Christ, this dream narrative helps highlight how much of the new religion was drawn from the old by Islander and European missionaries to the island. The transformation of belief and religious practices that they described were ever voiced in the symbolic language of Mangaia's previous religion.

In their contribution to such an ethnographically rich reading of the Mangaian reception of Christianity, Numangatini's

dreams seem far from the scandalous or the strange. By contrast, Gill, as the local instantiation of Jehovah's ministry and Victorian ethnography, resisted acknowledging the value of the dream narrative for his historical research. His response to these dreams is at one with the resistance of the Western consciousness to the apparent irrationalism of dream content. In this respect, the inhabitants of islands such as Mangaia have more in common, in their appreciation of the significance of dreaming, with psychoanalysts than with other representatives of Western learning such as historians. In this vernacular reading of the past, the strangest-seeming dream episodes, such as the head cutting and human flight experienced by Numangatini, become not so many examples of the bizarre nature of dreams, but a royal road to the indigenous history of the Pacific Islands.

Footnotes

I wish to thank the late Teariki No'oroa who read and commented on the Manganian text by Numangatini as well as my translation. Teariki was a descendant of Numangatini through his fourth wife, Araeva. Any remaining errors are my own responsibility. Glottals follow standard dictionaries, especially, Norio Shibata, *Manganian-English Dictionary*, 1999. Macrons are not included.

- 1 (Numangatini), 'Te Orama Numangatini', in W. W. Gill, 'Rarotonga Notes, Songs, Stars, Stories, [and] Letters', Polynesian Society MS Papers 1187, folder 59, microfilm 131, 132, Wellington, Alexander Turnbull Library, the National Library of New Zealand (hereafter ATL). The depositing of the Gill papers with the Polynesian Society is recounted in a series of letters between the Rev. J. E. Newell, J. Macdonald Gill and S. Percy Smith held in Polynesian Society MS Papers Acc. 80-115 Box 2A (Correspondence 1907), ATL.
- 2 W. W. Gill, *From Darkness to Light in Polynesia with Illustrative Clan Songs* (London, 1894), pp. 328-9.
- 3 The summary below differs in some respects from my earlier translation in 'Reading into the Past: A Historiography of Mangaia in the Cook Islands', PhD thesis, The Australian National University (Canberra, 1991), pp. 151-2. Further changes were adopted after advice from Teariki No'oroa. I have added glottal stops to quotations from the original texts.
- 4 The Manganian text reads: '*E Ina, e teatea anake mei a Orongo te tu i kirikiri mei runga e raro.*' A more literal translation might read: 'And lo, the thing was as completely white as the stones from up and down Orongo.' The terms *runga* and *raro* can refer to the directions up and down, as in up or down a village. See Mary V. Mark, 'The Relationship between Ecology and Myth in Mangaia', MA thesis, University of Otago (Dunedin, 1976), p. 42. The grounds of *marae* were covered with a layer of white stones (*kirikiri teatea*), which were periodically renewed by the priests. Stephen Savage, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language of Rarotonga* (Wellington, 1962, corrected reprint 1980), pp. 105, 107.
- 5 The original Manganian for this passage reads: '*kua 'e'e maira ratou e mea ngiti ua kare i mouta mai.*' According to Teariki No'oroa, "'e'e" means 'excited shout'; 'mouta' (*mo-uta*) refers to coming onto the beach, e.g., the term '*akamouta* = move further up onto the beach. Conversely, *motai* refers to going towards the sea, e.g. in the term '*akamotai* = move towards the sea. Another term is '*akamoraro* = be humble. '*Mea ngiti*' refers to the ship still being so far out at sea that it looked very small from the island.

- 6 According to Teariki No'oroa, the term *tanga* refers to a piece of something: eg., *tanga 'ei* refers to a bundle of 'ei; though it seems an indeterminate size, Teariki pointed out that it could in fact mean a large number. Savage (*A Dictionary*, p. 346) mentions *tanga-rakau* = a small piece of wood, a chip, cf. Shibata (*Mangaian-English*, p. 282), a piece of wood. Other relevant examples in Shibata include, *tanga ngao* = much; *tanga moa* = flock of flying foxes.
- 7 The two missionaries being referred to are Davida and Ti'are (also spelt Ti'ere), who successfully introduced Christianity to Mangaia. They originally came from Taha'a in the Society Islands. They were trained by the London Missionary Society in Tahiti.
- 8 A useful discussion of this issue with reference to the Hawaiian Islands can be found in Jane Bathgate, 'Moe 'Uhane — The Dream: An Account of the Dream in Traditional Hawaiian Culture', *Pacific Studies*, 13: 2 (March 1990), pp. 55–6.
- 9 Besides Bathgate, other references to Polynesian dreams (general discussions or examples) used in the following paragraph come from, Raymond Firth, 'The Meaning of Dreams', *Tikopia Ritual and Belief* (London, 1967), pp. 162–73; Gill, *Cook Islands Custom* (Suva, 1979), p. 22; Elsdon Best, *The Maori* (Wellington, 1924), I, pp. 225–9; Tuho: *The Children of the Mist* (New Plymouth, 1925), pp. 28–9, 373, 383, 1001–4; Abraham Fornander, *Hawaiian Antiquities and Folklore* (Honolulu, 1916–20), IV, pp. 442, 498, 536; V, pp. 74, 162, 612–4; VI, pp. 90, 92, 102, 104, 124–30, 489–91; Te Uira Henry, *Ancient Tahiti* (Honolulu, 1928), pp. 220–3, 226–7; S. M. Kamakau, *Ka Po'e Kahiko* (Honolulu, 1964), pp. 56–7; Douglas L. Oliver, *Ancient Tahitian Society* (Honolulu, 1974), 69–71; J. Prytz Johansen, *The Maori and his Religion in its Non-ritualistic Aspects* (Copenhagen, 1954), pp. 255–7; Te Rangi Hiroa, *Ethnology of Mangareva* (Honolulu, 1938), pp. 30, 51–2, 54; Von den Steinen, *Marquesan Myths* (Canberra, 1988), pp. 76, 84–5.
- 10 Tuta Nihoniho, in Best, *Maori*, I, p. 227.
- 11 Johansen, *The Maori*, p. 256.
- 12 Gill, *Cook Islands Custom*, p. 22.
- 13 Details of the complex proceedings told in Reilly, 'Reading into the Past', pp. 223–9. A recent history of Mangaia suggests that Numangatini did not become king (*ariki*) until after the arrival of the missionaries. Jeanne Van Loon Apeldoorn and Ngametua Kareroa, 'The Arrival of the Missionaries on Mangaia' in 'The Last Peacemakers', MS. However, the installation ceremony they cite from Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795–1895* (London, 1899), p. 364, is quoted from Gill, *Darkness to Light*, p. 379; Gill dates the ceremony to Numangatini's installation as *ariki pa tai* in 1814. Apeldoorn or her contemporary storytellers might have been referring

to a later period when the *ariki pa uta* appears to have been transformed into the *ariki* of the island as a sort of titular ruler. Apeldoorn and Kareroa's material, especially when derived from secondary sources, has to be taken with a pinch of salt.

- 14 Gill, *Darkness to Light*, p. 315; W. W. Gill, *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific* (London, 1876), pp. 296–8.
- 15 The detailed identification of these men and relevant genealogical information can be found in Reilly, 'Reading into the Past', pp. 135–42.
- 16 Te Rangi Hiroa, *Mangaian Society* (Honolulu, 1934), p. 129, following information from Mamae (a Gill informant), identifies the *tapere* as Au-ruia; however, Te Rangi Hiroa noted that the district chiefs of Veitatei, Kei'a and Tava'enga identified the *tapere* as Te-ivi-o-Ru. This *tapere* and that of Rangatira were held by chiefs apparently related to the Ngariki and Ngati Mana'une. Te Rangi Hiroa, Cook Islands Field Notes, Vol. IV, Honolulu, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Library, MS SC Buck Group 3, Box 3.4, p. 32 (hereafter Field Notes).
- 17 Hiroa, *Mangaian Society*, p. 172 and map; Gill, *Darkness to Light*, p. 331.
- 18 Gill, *Myths and Songs*, p. 15; Hiroa, *Mangaian Society*, pp. 162–3, 175; Hiroa, Field Notes, p. 41; Apeldoorn and Kareroa, 'The Arrival of the Missionaries on Mangaia'.
- 19 Gill, *Myths and Songs*, p. 19.
- 20 Hiroa, *Mangaian Society*, p. 5 and map; P. Marshall, *Geology of Mangaia* (Honolulu, 1927), map; Shibata, *Mangaian-English*, pp. 45, 50; Teariki No'oroa, personal communication.
- 21 'Rev W. Wyatt Gill's M/S Book', London, Council for World Mission Archives, South Seas Personal Box 1 (hereafter 'Gill's M/S Book').
- 22 This association was first pointed out to me by Niel Gunson.
- 23 Gill, *Myths and Songs*, pp. 165–6, 263; Gill, *Darkness to Light*, p. 133 fn., 1.
- 24 See Reilly, 'Reading into the Past', p. 157; Gill, *Myths and Songs*, p. 13.
- 25 Gill, *Darkness to Light*, p. 330; John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South-Sea Islands* (London n.d. [first ed. 1837]), p. 221 fn.; George Gill, Letter, March 10, 1853, London, Council for World Mission Archives, South Seas Letters; Apeldoorn and Kareroa, 'Christian Beginnings' and 'Abolishment of the Tribal System'.
- 26 F. Allan Hanson and Louise Hanson, *Counterpoint in Maori Culture* (London, 1983), pp. 50, 55–6; Best, *Maori*, I, pp. 272–4.
- 27 Eg., Edwin M. Loeb, *History and Traditions of Niue* (Honolulu, 1926), pp. 143–4; Oliver, *Ancient Tahitian*, p. 509; Hanson and Hanson, *Counterpoint*, p. 170.
- 28 Gill, *Myths and Songs*, pp. 78–9, 80–1; Kate McCosh Clark, *Maori Tales and Legends* (Dunedin, 1896), pp. 68–75; J. F. Stimson, translator, *The Legends of*

- Maui and Tahaki* (Honolulu, 1934), p. 33; Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, pp. 617–21; 'Te Tarataro no te Tuna, no te Nu oki' ('The Story of the Tuna [Eel], and the Coco-nut'), *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 21: 3 (September 1912), pp. 125–8.
- 29 W. W. Gill, *Jottings from the Pacific* (New York, 1885), p. 113.
- 30 Hiroa, *Mangaian Society*, pp. 117–19; Gill, *Darkness to Light*, pp. 149–50.
- 31 *Ibid.*, pp. 157–8.
- 32 Te Rangi Hiroa, '8. The Lord of Mangaia', Honolulu, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Library, MS SC Buck, 'Mangaian MS Parts'.
- 33 Eg., the story of 'Mydo', a Society Islander, at a Moravian Brethren school in Mirfield, West Riding, Yorkshire. Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet, *Voyages and Travels Round the World* (London, 1841), pp. 180–1.
- 34 Kauraka Kauraka, *E Au Tuatua Taito no Manihiki* (Suva, 1987), pp. 1–3; Kauraka Kauraka, *Tales of Manihiki* (Suva, 1982), pp. 11–13.
- 35 Eg., Tatuava Tanga et al., *Atiu Nui Maruarua: E Au Tua Ta'ito* (Suva, 1984), pp. 6ff.; Kenneth P. Emory, *The Island of Lanai: A Survey of Native Culture* (Honolulu, reprint 1969), p. 12; Fornander, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, IV, pp. 52, 56, 58, 72–4, 522; V, pp. 414, 514–6; Kauraka, *Legends from the Atolls*, 1983, p. 22; Kauraka, *Manihikian Traditional Narratives* (Papaetoetoe, 1988), pp. 12, 25, 39; Hiroa, *Mangareva*, p. 361; Tyerman and Bennet, *Voyages*, pp. 72, 76.
- 36 Eg., Stimson, *The Legends*, pp. 18, 21, 35; Gill, *Myths and Songs*, pp. 52–3, 56–7, 59; Katherine Luomala, *Maui-of-a-Thousand-Tricks: His Oceanic and European Biographers* (Honolulu, 1949), pp. 41ff., 55, 154, 183, 187, 224; Sir George Grey, *Polynesian Mythology* (1961), pp. 62–8.
- 37 W. W. Gill, *Life in the Southern Isles; or, Scenes and Incidents in the South Pacific and New Guinea* (London, 1876), p. 139.
- 38 *Ibid.*, pp. 134–5; 'Gill's M/S Book'; Shibata, *Mangaian-English*, p. 217.
- 39 'Gill's M/S Book'.
- 40 Gill, *Darkness to Light*, p. 330.
- 41 This allusion was pointed out by Teariki No'oroa.
- 42 Eg., Hiroa, *Mangareva*, pp. 33, 81; Fornander, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, IV, pp. 103, 530–2.
- 43 A thorough exploration of the term and its significance in Mangaian understandings of the past is in Reilly, "'In the Beginning was the Word": *Tuarangi*, Evil Spirits and Foreign Beings in Mangaian History', *Journal of Pacific History*, 28: 1 (June 1993), pp. 3–14.
- 44 Gill, *Darkness to Light*, pp. 328–9; Te Rangi Hiroa, 'Notes towards "Advent of Christianity" in the Cook Islands', Honolulu, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Library, MS SC Buck Group 3, Box 7.5, p. 641; Te Rangi Hiroa, *Mangaia and the Mission* (Suva, 1993), p. 17; Papa Aratangi, 'The Entry of Christianity into Mangaian Society in the 1820s', BD Project, Pacific

- Theological College (1986), p. 82; 'The Transformation of the Manganian Religion', M.Theol. thesis, Pacific Theological College (1988), p. 70.
- 45 Gill, *Myths and Songs*, p. 158.
- 46 Apeldoorn and Kareroa, 'The Arrival of the Missionaries on Mangaia'.
- 47 Hiroa, *Manganian Society*, p. 186.
- 48 Gill, *Darkness to Light*, pp. 328–9; Tyerman and Bennet, *Voyages*, p. 178.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 'General and Miscellaneous memoranda respecting the Mission at Mangaia', Polynesian Society MS Papers 1187, folder 61, ATL.
- 51 Tyerman and Bennet, *Voyages*, p. 178; Aratangi, 'Entry of Christianity', pp. 39 and n.; personal communications from the late Pokino Aperahama, a *nangatira*, and Papa Aratangi.
- 52 Aratangi, 'Entry of Christianity', p. 84.
- 53 Maretu, translated, annotated and edited by Marjorie Tuainekore Crocombe, *Cannibals and Converts: Radical Change in the Cook Islands*, (Suva, 1983), pp. 102–3, 112 (pars. 273, 275–8, 296–8).
- 54 Gill, *Life*, pp. 149–50; 'Gill's M/S Book'.
- 55 H. A. H. Driessen, 'Outriggerless Canoes and Glorious Beings: Pre-Contact Prophecies in the Society Islands', *Journal of Pacific History*, 17: 1 (January 1982), pp. 3–17. Examples in Gill, *Darkness to Light*, p. 261; Gill, *Life*, pp. 340–2; Fornander, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, VI, p. 285; Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, pp. 4–5, 430–1; Loeb, *History*, p. 34; Hiroa, *Mangareva*, pp. 93–4, 445; George Turner, *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before* (London, 1884), pp. 24, 73.
- 56 'Gill's M/S Book'. Gill relates several other similar prophecies by Arokapiti in English in *Life*, p. 341. Gill heard the Manganian text on November 4, 1868, from Kakoua.
- 57 Personal communication from Pokino Aperahama.
- 58 'Gill's M/S Book'.
- 59 The following material is based on personal communications from Pokino Aperahama, Atingakau Tangatakino and Koroa. The translation of the second prophecy is based on information from Teariki No'oroa, who contributed the following notes. *Vaevae keke* is a Manganian equivalent to the Maori *waevae tapu*, referring to a visitor who has never been in the locality before; in New Zealand, they are surrounded by particular ritual cautions to dispel any dangerous influences they might have brought with them. The metaphorical use of *kaokao rau aika* stresses that the new god, like this young centre rib, has not yet reached its full extent or potential. The banana leaf was also frequently used by Manganian narrators to represent the island's polity.
- 60 Gill, *Life*, p. 341.

- 61 Gill, *Myths and Songs*, p. 301. Gill used the more commonly accepted variant of Ti'ere instead of Ti'are (see Shibata, *Mangaian-English*, p. 319).
- 62 Savage, *A Dictionary*, p. 370.
- 63 Gill, *Myths and Songs*, p. 13.
- 64 Savage, *A Dictionary*, pp. 292, 401-3.
- 65 Gill, *Myths and Songs*, p. 13. See fuller discussion of the linkages between Tangaroa and the *tuarangi* in Reilly, 'In the Beginning'.
- 66 Eg., Gill, *Myths and Songs*, p. 14.
- 67 Maretu, *Cannibals and Converts*, pp. 122, 124 (Par. 337).
- 68 Gill, *Darkness to Light*, pp. 329-30.
- 69 Eg., Gunson, 'Tongan Historiography: Shamanic Views of Time and History', in Phyllis Herda, Jennifer Terrell and Niel Gunson (eds), *Tongan Culture and History* (Canberra, 1990), pp. 12-20; 'Understanding Polynesian Traditional History', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 28: 2 (December 1993), pp. 139-58. Another historian who has written on shamanism and chieftainship in Polynesia is Nicholas Thomas, *Marquesan Societies: Inequality and Political Transformation in Eastern Polynesia* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 109-28; 'Marginal Powers: Shamanism and the Disintegration of Hierarchy', *Critique of Anthropology*, 8: 3 (n.d.), pp. 53-74.
- 70 Information regarding shamanism in this and subsequent paragraphs is derived from Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton, 1964); Joan Halifax, *Shamanic Voices: A Survey of Visionary Narratives* (London, 1980).
- 71 Gill, *Myths and Songs*, pp. 19, 32, 35; Gill, *Cook Islands Custom*, pp. 13-14; Hiroa, *Mangaian Society*, pp. 177-8.
- 72 [Mamae], 'E Tara no Eenee', GNZMSS 45, Auckland Public Library (hereafter AP); Gill, *Myths and Songs*, pp. 221-4.
- 73 'E Tara ia Ngaru', GNZMSS 45, AP; Gill, *Myths and Songs*, pp. 225-36.
- 74 'Tera mai taua Kete Amo ra', GNZMSS 45, AP; Gill, *Myths and Songs*, pp. 51-65.
- 75 Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 367.
- 76 Savage, *A Dictionary*, p. 139; Gill, *Myths and Songs*, pp. 122 illustration, 123 fn., 2.
- 77 Gill, *Myths and Songs*, p. 124; 'Pe'e no nunga i te Kapa a Akatonu', GNZMSS 45, AP.
- 78 Gill, *Myths and Songs*, p. 123.
- 79 Kauraka, *Tales of Manihiki*, pp. 11-16; Kauraka, *Tuatua Taito no Manihiki*, pp. 1-3.

'Through a Glass Darkly'

Ownership of Fijian Methodism, 1850-80

Andrew Thornley

Wesleyan Methodist missionaries sailed from Tonga to Fiji in 1835. They reached the eastern Lau Islands and received permission from the paramount chief, Tui Nayau, to reside and proselytise.¹ By 1850, the Methodists had gained about 2,000 communicant members among the Fiji Islands and a further 3,500 people were attending worship services. Directing this missionary work were 12 European missionaries, the initial group coming from England but, from 1850 onwards, drawn mainly from Australia. Assisting them were about 50 indigenous teachers and catechists, predominantly Fijian but including more than a dozen Tongans. Four of these catechists were in preparation for the ordained ministry.²

The situation of the Methodists improved considerably in the next 30 years. By 1880, there were 24,000 members and more than 100,000 attending church worship, a very rapid growth in church numbers, which, by way of comparison, exceeded the Methodist following in Australia. This dramatic change has been analysed in recent texts.³ What is less well known are issues related to leadership in the church, centred on questions of decision-making and control, involving European missionaries and indigenous ministers. This chapter seeks to explore such issues.

Before turning to the substance of the chapter, an explanatory word needs to be included to help the reader reconstruct Methodist missionary organisation in the South Pacific during the 19th century. Until 1855, the Methodist Missionary Society in England was responsible for work in the South Pacific, which included New Zealand, Tonga, Fiji and Samoa. After 1855 an autonomous Australasian Conference was established; the term 'Australasia' included the Methodist churches in the Australian colonies (where there were 11 districts) and the dependent mission districts of New Zealand, Tonga and Fiji. Samoa was added shortly after. Each of the mission districts was headed by a chairman accountable to the annual Conference in Australia. In the case of Fiji, the District Chairman was responsible to the Secretary for Methodist Overseas Missions in London until 1855, and then to the Secretary in Sydney from that time onwards. Any major decisions relating to mission work in Fiji required the consent of the supervising Conference.

During the 30 years from 1850 to 1880, while the church in Fiji was growing rapidly in numbers, the issue of leadership emerged. As we will see, this matter was of considerable concern to the headquarters of Methodist missionary work, because it involved the development and role of Fijian ministers, the first of whom had been ordained in 1851. In the Australian colonies during this period, the ministers controlled the church, as laid down by Wesleyan Methodist rules. They met annually in Conference to formulate policies for the 14 districts. The European missionaries in Fiji possessed that same ministerial authority. Given a very healthy membership in the Fijian church by 1880 and a preponderance of Fijian ministers over European, a few questions present themselves. Were there avenues for Fijians to become church leaders? To what extent between 1850 and 1880 did Fijian ministers assume significant decision-making positions within their church? Was devolution of authority supported by missionaries and

by the governing church in Australia? An investigation into the nature of authority in the Fijian Methodist Church and its connection with the sending churches of England and Australia will help to shed light on the relationship between Islander and non-Islander in an era of culture contact influenced significantly by external pressures.

In Fiji, the first four Islander ministers were ordained in the early 1850s. The celebrated Tongan missionary Joeli Bulu was the first and the Fijian Josua Mateinaniu, who had accompanied Cross and Cargill to Lakeba in 1835, was also one of that group. A further 68 teachers were ordained before 1880, at least 10 of them having come as missionaries from Tonga.⁴

In 1853, Robert Young, representing the English Methodist Church, visited Fiji. His major task was to prepare the missionaries for the imminent transfer of responsibility of the Fiji District from England to Australasia, which as we have seen took place in 1855. However, Young had also been instructed to inquire into the position of the 'native agency', as the Fijian teachers and ministers were referred to.⁵ They were assuming a critical role in the organisation of the Fiji District, which, in following the English model, was divided into a number of circuits. These circuits corresponded as closely as possible to the areas of influence of Fiji's paramount chiefs. A European missionary was placed in charge of each circuit; Fijian ministers were assigned to sections within each circuit while teachers or catechists were responsible for villages within each section.

Young described the duties of the Fijian minister as very much the same as those of the missionary. This would have involved supervision of a number of villages within his section, visiting and encouraging the teachers or catechists who resided in each village, holding services of baptism, marriage, confirmation of membership and maintaining the rules and regulations that governed the conduct of Methodist Church members.

As a sympathetic observer, Young pressed for early Conference recognition of the status and role of Fijian ministers. He recommended, following normal Methodist practice, that Fijians serve a four-year trial period before ordination. From the time of their probation, Young felt, they should be 'respectably clothed', so it was agreed that Fijian ministers be supplied with a coat, trousers, shirt and a hat, suitably designed for the hot climate. These articles, to be purchased from the mission store, were in lieu of an allowance of £3-5. Young was very impressed with the quality of Fijian ministers: 'Being chosen from the list of Catechists they are well-trying men; such as by their manifest piety, ability and zeal, have proved themselves the most qualified for the high important trust.'⁶

In his report, Young referred to the Fijian ministers as 'Native Assistant Missionaries'. The origin of this term is not clear. The indigenous ministers in the Methodist missions of Ceylon and Gambia were at this time referred to by the simple and more explicable title of 'Native Minister'.⁷ The phrase 'Assistant Missionary' was used by the British Methodist Conference when referring to English ministers who were ineligible for the full benefits of the ordained ministry.⁸ This suggests a clue to the meaning of 'Native Assistant Missionary', because Fijian ministers were not accorded the right to attend the annual meeting of the Fiji District. This situation was endorsed by the Australasian Methodist Conference in 1855 when it recognised a 'subordinate class of Paid Agents called Native Assistant Missionaries' and decreed that the names of these men be entered in a discrete section of Conference minutes, after the lists of Australian ministers.⁹ From the very beginning, it appears that the status of Fijian ministers was to be regarded differently from that of Australian ministers.

Missionary perceptions of the indigenous ministry in the Pacific Islands might in part have contributed to the use of the term 'Native Assistant Missionary'. When Robert Young travelled on to

visit the Tonga Methodist Church in 1853, he received from the Australian missionaries the following assessment of the Tongan 'Native Assistant Missionaries':

At present though they render very efficient service they could not be supposed equal to the work of sustaining alone the cause of God. We believe they are the best and brightest of their countrymen but they are only in a *transition* [sic] state — their minds, though capable of expansion are yet contracted, their knowledge small.¹⁰

There seems little reason to suspect that the attitudes of missionaries in Fiji were significantly different to those in Tonga. The relationship and contact between the two districts was very close. If anything, at least in the 1850s, the missionaries had a more sympathetic regard for the people of Tonga, where the Methodist Church was enjoying much greater success. Missionary thinking was influenced by concepts such as 'transition', 'subordinate class' and 'Native Assistant Missionary'. The last of these terms persisted in the church records until 1869, after which Fijian names were simply listed in the same way as Australian names.¹¹

After 1855, events in Fiji proved favourable for the Methodist Church. A number of influential chiefs, notably Ratu Seru Epenisa Cakobau, supported Christian work and church membership rose from about 3,000 in 1855 to almost 10,000 in 1860 and 15,000 in 1865. In the history of the Fiji Methodist Church, the two decades from 1855-75 represented the time of its greatest influence; Fiji was experiencing only preliminary contact with European settlement and colonial influence was marginal.¹² Meanwhile, the numbers of ordained Fijian ministers was increasing, though not enough to meet the demand. By the late 1860s, there were over 40 ordained men though not all were in active work.

In 1863, Fijian ministers were granted their first experience of authority at a district level. Following an initiative from Joseph

Waterhouse, who had been a missionary in Fiji since the early 1850s, Fijian ministers were permitted to attend the District Meeting and gather together in a separate session. The subject matter of their discussions was not intended to be extensive: they covered, for example, matters concerning Fijian ministers, such as recommendations of workers for ordination and placement of ministerial appointments. But they were also permitted to discuss mission work in general without commenting on areas under the jurisdiction of the missionaries.¹³

For their part, the missionaries held their District Meeting separately, after the Fijian sessions and often after the Fijians had returned to their areas of work. All suggestions from the Fijian ministers required a majority approval from the missionaries. In 1865, the Australasian Conference approved these new arrangements and a year later more than 30 Fijian ministers attended the District Meeting and held their separate Fijian session. The missionaries gave qualified support to the meeting. 'We have met with difficulties [but] see the desirability of moving steadily and surely giving our native Brethren a careful training in Church government.'¹⁴

By 1868, missionary attitudes to the new scheme were changing. Some were unhappy that Fijian ministers were absent each year from their postings 'for many weeks in succession while attending District Meeting'. This situation could be remedied if only two Fijian ministers from each of the 12 circuits attended the annual meeting. The Australasian conference rejected this suggestion in 1869, preferring instead to maintain a focus on the further training of Fijian ministers. There were reasons for this: mission authorities in Australia were concerned about the rising costs of supporting missionaries — in 1870, a missionary was paid £160 a year while Fijian ministers received £5. In addition, there was a growing feeling in the Australian church that Fiji should move towards autonomy. Behind this sentiment lay the

understanding that many areas of Melanesia remained to be evangelised and resources should be directed there. So, a divergence between the views of the sending church and a majority of missionaries in Fiji can be seen fairly early in their differing perceptions of Fijian ministerial authority.¹⁵

The 1870s proved to be a decisive time in resolving the matter of Fijian ministerial rights. For their part, the Fijians had little direct input and were reliant on the opinions of the resident missionaries — not a satisfactory situation since missionary opinion fluctuated considerably.

The most prominent Methodist missionary in Fiji at this time was Frederick Langham, who had been in Fiji since 1857 and became Chairman of the District in 1869. He led the district with papal-like authority, often to the frustration of other European settlers and colonial representatives. Langham, at first, defended the annual meeting of the Fijian ministers against the criticisms of his fellow missionaries, who, without consulting their Fijian brethren, resolved to abolish their meeting in 1872. Langham warned that the Fijians would be ‘vexed’ about this decision:

While other denominations are advancing the Native Ministers even further than we have got them — giving them an equal position with European ministers in Synods etc. — we propose to shove them back a bit. The meeting is highly valued by the Native Ministers and our oldest and best men will be greatly pained at our dealing so unceremoniously with them while their surprise if not their suspicion or distrust will be aroused at our acting in the secret manner in which we have done ... The Native Ministers are as a whole a worthy body of men ... other churches are just now recognising the importance of the Native Ministry so that English missionaries may be released from the fields. I fear that our Resolution will not promote this very desirable object.¹⁶

Langham has been quoted at length because of the degree of his authority and because he later considerably shifted his views. At this time, however, in 1872, his opinion was supported by a minority of the current missionaries as well as some prominent recently retired missionaries including James Calvert, Joseph Waterhouse and William Moore, who had preceded Langham as chairman. The Australasian Conference endorsed this view. In so doing it dealt a sharp rebuke to the majority missionary opinion in Fiji, reminding them that Fijian ministers had the right to be consulted on any Conference matter affecting them.¹⁷

The Australasian Conference, in an endeavour to resolve the problem of getting all Fijian ministers to the annual meeting, proposed that the Fijian church be divided into three separate districts. Fiji already had as many church members as the whole church in Australia so division seemed logical. Also, transport difficulties among the islands would be eased.

The missionaries deliberated on the prospect of division. They did so at a time when Fiji was undergoing a difficult period politically, with various chiefly confederations either bidding for supremacy or seeking to go their own way. A power struggle had erupted between the Fijian chief Cakobau, who controlled central Fiji, and the Tongan leader, Ma'afu, who dominated affairs in the eastern Lau Islands. Annexation to the British Empire appeared a possibility. It was against the background of this unpredictable situation that the Fiji church — or, more precisely, a handful of missionaries — now had to consider division.

A number of missionaries supported the idea, although their motives differed. Jesse Carey, Principal of the Theological Institution at Navuba, was in favour, though not if it involved handing over full authority to Fijian ministers. If the latter happened, Carey claimed, Fiji would fall into syncretism. Missionary oversight was still needed.¹⁸ The more liberal missionary view, expressed by John Leggoe of Lau, supported division and placed greater faith in the abilities of Fijian ministers. Leggoe felt the church had been long

enough in Fiji and could stand on its own with half the present complement of 10 missionaries. Leggoe expressed concern for the spiritual requirements of other Pacific Islands. Fiji had a Bible, a written language and literature, a Fijian ministry and a form of discipline:

And thus having all the machinery at work for carrying on and extending work in Fiji, I think we should allow the Native Church with the oversight of a few English missionaries to develop itself and turn our attention to other parts of the heathen.¹⁹

At their annual meeting at the close of 1873, the missionaries voted for division. This scheme promised much greater authority for Fijian ministers but was compromised by the fact that final decisions had to be approved by a Conference of exclusively European missionaries. Despite this impediment, the plan for division promised a significant step forward in Fijian autonomy. Fijian ministers would now be part of a decision-making process in partnership with the missionaries and would be freed from the situation, established in 1865, where they simply made recommendations to an annual meeting that they were not entitled to attend on an equal footing with missionaries.²⁰

The new scheme was submitted to the Australasian Conference, but with it went the opposition of District Chairman Langham. It will be recalled that he was the defender of the Fijian ministers in 1872 when it was proposed to abolish their annual meeting. Now he was shifting ground. He expressed concern about Fijian ministers outnumbering English ministers and the prospect of senior Fijian ministers swaying the other Fijian representatives. He asserted that, at a time of political sensitivity, the Fijian chiefs would misconstrue the plan as an attempt to divide the country. He finally pointed out that six of the 15 Fijian ministers present at their 1873 meeting had voted against division and only one in favour.²¹

How can Langham's apparent change of opinion be explained? Firstly, the 1865 arrangements, while bringing together all the Fijian ministers in a semblance of democracy, placed them in a position where they were totally dependent on the missionaries. Secondly, under the new scheme, missionary supremacy was not guaranteed. Thirdly, of equal weight in Langham's mind, was the diminution of his authority if the new proposal were to prevail. Before the cession of Fiji to the British in 1874, the Chairman of the Fiji Methodist Church was arguably the single most influential European in the islands, at least among Fijians. Division of the Fijian church would replace a single chairman with three positions of equal authority. Senior missionaries seeking promotion were not averse to this idea; however, overall, the influence of the church on Fijian affairs would probably have lessened.

Langham's influence with the Australasian Conference nullified the plan, even though it had the support of eight out of 10 missionaries. The latter were annoyed with Langham for using the votes of Fijian ministers in his support. They argued that since the status of Fijian ministers was not yet equal to their own, the weight of missionary opinion should have been taken into account.²²

The views of the Fijian ministers themselves — caught as they were in the crossfire of missionary opinion — are difficult to determine reliably. Their votes on the division of the church indicated uncertainty about its implications and there is significance in the fact that a majority of those present in 1873 remained uncommitted in their voting. Langham was probably correct in drawing attention to the influence of chiefly opinion since Fijian ministers depended for their daily sustenance on the goodwill of the ordinary villagers and, through them, on a tributary relationship with the chiefs.

As for the annual meeting of Fijian ministers, it was valued highly despite its inadequacies in giving real authority. The more senior among the ministers appeared to prefer their annual meeting

to the unknown prospects of division. The Fijians' collective attitude can be gauged in a letter signed by the elderly Joeli Bulu on behalf of 31 ministers at the 1874 Fiji District Meeting. This letter was in response to suggestions by one of the missionaries that 90 per cent of the Fijian ministers were opposed to their annual meeting. They replied:

We write this letter to you that you may know our minds. It is our minds that our Annual District Meeting may be continued. We find the benefit of it and the usefulness of it to us; some things that were not understood by us are now understood by us through our assembling together. Therefore we beg of you to be of good mind and let our yearly gathering together be continued.²³

Joel Bulu might have been encouraged to write this letter by the missionary Joseph Waterhouse, who had returned for a third term of service in Fiji as a missionary on the island of Bau (where he had been instrumental 20 years earlier in securing the conversion of Chief Cakobau). Waterhouse returned to Fiji partly to enter the debate over the status of Fijian ministers. He had declined the chairman's position when Langham offered to stand down in his favour, a gesture based no doubt on grounds of seniority. Rather, Waterhouse seemed single-minded in his determination to promote the rights of Fijian ministers so that they could be virtually free agents with a minimum of supervision. He expressed dissatisfaction with the running of the 1874 District Meeting, complaining that the privileges of Fijian ministers had been curtailed by insensitive missionaries. Waterhouse commented, 'There was a disposition on the part of some of our English brethren to ride rough-shod over the native clergy and the latter were quite aware of it.'²⁴

In 1874, developments in the sister Methodist Church of Tonga put pressure on the Fijian church to clarify the position of Fijian ministers. The Tongan Methodist Church decided that missionaries and Tongan ministers would have equal voting rights

in the sessions that discussed affairs of the Tongan church. The new scheme was introduced in 1875 and, despite the fears of sceptics, who predicted disastrous consequences arising from the increased presence of Tongan ministers, the Chairman of the Tongan church, Shirley Baker, reported favourably on the initial proceedings.²⁵

At the beginning of 1875, the Australasian Methodist Church requested its Fiji District to consider implementation of a constitution similar to the Tongan scheme. This triggered a year period of intense debate and division over the rights status of Fijian ministers. Admitting them to a position of equality with missionaries, the situation that applied in Tonga, would give Fijian ministers effective control of the church in Fiji.

Only one missionary, Waterhouse, took up the Tongan plan with enthusiasm. He was becoming increasingly irritated with the attitude of younger missionaries, who, he claimed, treated long-serving Fijian ministers impertinently. Such missionaries, Waterhouse wrote, should join the Episcopalian Church in the United States, who wished to be 'Bishops over black Ministers'. The Tongan plan was the only method of breaking down the 'middle wall of partition' between missionary and minister.²⁶ At the 1875 District Meeting, Waterhouse proposed giving Fijian ministers immediate voting power. He drew comparisons with missions in other countries: 'In India the native churches are beginning to walk alone in large numbers and similar news comes from Ceylon, China, Africa and the West Indies.'²⁷

Other senior missionaries dissented from Waterhouse's position and instead offered the principle of representation as a transition stage towards full self-government of the church. The idea of representation had been raised first in 1868 and dismissed then by Jesse Carey as 'unmethodistic'.²⁸ What he meant was that, from its earliest days, Methodism had insisted on ordained ministers having equal access to church meetings. Now the Fiji missionaries were recommending that only a selected number of

Fijian ministers — one for each of the 10 circuits — represent their brethren at the annual meeting.

Frederick Langham threw his considerable influence behind representation. He considered the changes advocated to be all that were necessary. He claimed to have the support of the respected Joeli Bulu. Langham called for a gradualist approach to avoid having to ‘retrace our steps after doing mischief’. This was a reference to the missionary fear that delegating authority to the indigenous leaders would somehow bring about a decline in the church’s position. Langham questioned the capability of Fijian ministers for responsibility: ‘These are some of the men to vote upon our characters — our stations — and finances — to be selected as Representatives to Conference. Oh Mercy — save me from my friends!’²⁹

Once again, records of Fijian opinion are prejudiced by their missionary origin. Also the natural reserve of Fijians precluded overt discussion. Nevertheless, the evidence does indicate some frustration among Fijians to the slow pace of change in 1875-76 and some degree of resistance to the inflexibility of missionary rule.

As we have already seen, the Fijian ministers had appreciated their attendance at the annual meeting despite their limited role under the terms of the 1865 constitution. Now news of the changes in Tonga created a mood of dissatisfaction and even suspicion of European motives. Matters in Fiji appeared to be moving too slowly. Tension occurred between the missionaries and the Tongan ministers serving in Fiji; the latter were wishing to return to their homeland and were delayed in their circuits — deliberately so, claimed Waterhouse, because of the shortage of workers in Fiji.³⁰ Feelings of antagonism were compounded by missionary treatment of Fijian ministers. The missionary scholar Lorimer Fison referred to the ‘unjust’ and ‘tyrannous’ actions of some missionaries who used their ministers as virtual servants. The inadequacies of the 1865 constitution prevented the reporting of this kind of abuse.³¹

When the Fijian ministers gathered at the crucial District Meeting in October 1875, they were equipped with a program of reform, including items such as complete equality with missionaries in the District Meeting, the placement of Fijian ministers in charge of circuits and more financial support to ministers for housing and canoes. Langham, who believed that Waterhouse was the motivating force behind the reform program, described the Fijian mood at the meeting as refractory and sullen.³²

The representation proposals were placed before the meeting of Fijian ministers. It was carefully explained to them, freely discussed and then put to the vote. Of the 21 Fijian ministers present, 12 voted for it, one against and the remainder did not vote.

The absence of unanimity on this issue is significant and missionaries drew different interpretations of the Fijian response. On the one hand, Fison played down the one dissenting vote, highlighting instead the strong speech made in favour of representation by Joeli Bulu. Fison believed the changes had the approval of Fijian ministers without exception.³³

By contrast, Waterhouse maintained that the Fijian ministers had been given prejudiced information. They were told that the Australasian Conference *was* going to adopt the idea of representation — this was incorrect. They were also informed that the plan was only a temporary measure and could be altered at any time. Waterhouse recorded that the one dissenting vote came from Eliesa Takelo, the second-most senior minister, and that Joeli Bulu had in fact abstained from voting. According to Waterhouse, some ministers regarded the plan as a *fait accompli* and voted for it in the hope that the Australasian Conference might ‘save’ the Fijian ministers — presumably by reversing the direction favoured by the missionaries. There was apparently concern among Fijians at the meeting that the missionaries would feel aggrieved if the ministers if they adopted a contrary view; indeed, Waterhouse asserted that the Fijian ministers had been ‘frightened’ (*rerevaka*) into a decision

by the missionaries.³⁴ This opinion was contested by Fison, who argued that the word '*rerevaka*' meant 'delicacy of feeling' and 'respect' rather than 'slavish fear'.³⁵ Whatever the truth in this argument over interpretation, the extent of missionary influence and Fijian uncertainty seems evident.

Apart from the District Meeting, the only recorded Fijian response to the representation proposals came from the Navuloa Circuit and was probably submitted at the initiative of Waterhouse, a tactic for which he was roundly condemned by Langham. However, such is the extent of this grievance, it cannot be dismissed as solely the machinations of one missionary. More than 100 members of the Navuloa Circuit signed a letter demanding that all ministers be able to attend the District Meeting; ministers denied an opportunity to attend would be 'despised by the people' and would become 'cold or indifferent' themselves:

The Native Ministers will learn well when they go to the District Meeting because all the English Missionaries are not all alike in judgement and it is of use to hear them all in the District Meeting that the right things may be discovered. We disapprove of our Native Ministers being prevented from learning how to govern.³⁶

The decision by the missionaries in Fiji to support the principle of representation did not signify its implementation. The Australasian Methodist Conference had to approve and could not do so until its next general assembly in 1878. During the intervening three years, the issue of the rights of Fijian ministers remained a matter of debate between Australia and Fiji. Within the Australian colonies, the Methodist ministers and mission authorities remained unconvinced of the merits of representation; there was some suspicion that Fijian ministers were being denied their rightful privileges. At the same time, there was a reluctance to embrace what was seen as radical change, such as the idea of giving Pacific

Islander ministers full equality of status when attending the Australasian Conference.³⁷

The missionaries in Fiji defended their position with three main arguments, all of which had previously surfaced in various forms. Firstly, they emphasised fears of the unknown — in particular, fears of the imminent collapse in missionary work if Fijian ministers were given equality. Langham interpreted the moves towards self-sufficiency in the Ceylonese and Hawaiian churches as a disaster for Christian progress and implied a similar result in Fiji.³⁸ The missionaries also expressed fears for their own integrity when they opposed the right of Fijian ministers to vote on matters relating to missionary character. They argued that since the status of Fijian ministers did not make them members of the Australasian Conference, they were not in a position of equality with the missionaries and did not have the right to sit in judgment on them.³⁹

A second argument was that of paternalism, involving the discrediting of the abilities of Fijian ministers. They were ‘hardworking useful men under the supervision of missionaries’, but without that supervision they would soon get into trouble because the majority of them were ‘lacking in that essential requisite in a good superintendent’.⁴⁰ Langham believed Fiji was ‘not yet ripe for the Tonga concession’ and he was not prepared to push Fijian ministers into positions ‘for which they are not fitted’.⁴¹

The third reason that buttressed missionary opinion was the disproportion of numbers between Fijian ministers and missionaries. This produced what Fison called a ‘mischievous effect’, which would only lessen over time:

[In Tonga] the number of Native Ministers in full connexion is not in great excess of that of the Missionaries, but here the natives are in the overwhelming majority. The younger men also far outnumber their elders and these young gentlemen require a considerable amount of instruction.

I recognise to the full the equal rights of the native brethren with myself, but the full exercise of those rights is a matter of time and education.⁴²

In 1878, the General Conference of the Australasian Methodist Church adopted the principle of representation in Fiji.⁴³ The issue of church control was now largely resolved in favour of the missionaries. Joseph Waterhouse left Fiji that same year, very much isolated and embittered. Having lost confidence in Langham's leadership, he had brought charges against him at the 1877 District Meeting. The charges, all of which were dismissed, had nothing to do with the status of Fijian ministers.⁴⁴

In the first year of the new constitution (1878), eight Fijian representatives attended the District Meeting. They had increased powers on paper but their decreased numbers probably gave them less influence. Their continuing weak position can be seen at this meeting; the missionaries voted themselves an increase of £20 in their annual stipend, to a salary of £200. At the same time, they refused a request from the Fijian representatives for an increase in their stipends, which ranged from £5 for a probationer to £20 for a senior minister.

The missionaries in Fiji signified their lack of confidence in their Fijian brethren when they effectively made it more difficult for them to enter the ministry. In 1876, the position of catechist (*vakatawa*) was created, ranked between teacher and minister. The employment of catechists enabled the church in Fiji to continue its work without increasing the number of Fijian ministers. The new position also prevented younger men from getting into the ministry since they now needed to have served as catechists before seeking ordination. Missionaries placed on record their dissatisfaction with younger Fijian ministerial candidates: 'It is highly desirable that additional safeguards be provided against the selection of unsuitable men.'⁴⁴ The effects of this change can be traced statistically. From 1850 to 1875, 66 Fijian ministers were ordained,

with an average age of 32. From 1879 to 1900 — a period of rapid growth in Methodist Church following — a further 60 ministers were ordained, with an average age of 36.

The 1878 constitution, enshrining representation and an inferior status for Fijian ministers, was intended as a temporary expedient. But how long was 'temporary'? Reflecting the social Darwinian thinking of the day, the missionaries talked of the need for more time until Fijian ministers were ready to assume full responsibilities; the degree and pace of change lay in missionary hands. But there was no urgency for change in the decades succeeding 1880. The same Fijian ministers tended to be elected as representatives; new ideas were not sympathetically received in the centre of power. Those Fijians who tried to bring about change were summarily dealt with and the urge for reform subsided.⁴⁶

The new generation of missionaries, greatly influenced by Langham, who stayed in Fiji for another 20 years until 1898, had the same lack of faith in the abilities of Fijian ministers as had their predecessors. On numerous occasions throughout the later part of the 19th century and into the next, pronouncements were made lamenting the unsuitability of Fijian ministers for senior positions of authority.⁴⁷ The claim of the Fijian ministry for ownership of its church seemed as far away as the Methodist principles that had been put aside in shaping the structure of the Fijian church.

In summary, some answers have emerged to the questions raised in the opening paragraphs. By 1880, 30 years after the first ordinations, Fijian ministers remained largely outside the controlling church structures. This was partly because they did not actively seek positions of leadership, though neither were they encouraged in that direction. At the annual District Meetings, the Fijians were confronted with new rules and methods of discussion and felt out of their depth or simply outmanoeuvred. Just as important in explaining the ambivalent status of Fijian ministers was the resistance by Australian missionaries in Fiji to any real

sharing of authority; this missionary opposition stemmed from a persistent lack of trust in Fijian capabilities.

The critical decisions on authority had been made by 1880. Missionaries largely trained in Australia maintained effective control of Fijian Methodism until after World War II. The first Fijian minister to be given responsibility for a circuit was appointed in the days of the Great Depression and that was a temporary position necessitated by economic circumstances.

Stephen Neill, historian of Christian missions, has pointed to the general tardiness of many missions throughout the world towards the transfer of authority and Fiji appears to provide such an illustration.⁴⁸ Is it, then, an adequate explanation to argue that Fiji's missionaries were simply people of their time, caught up in a colonial and cultural framework from which they could not escape? Perhaps. More progress was made in Tonga during the same years and the influence of striking personalities such as Taufua'ahau (King George Tupou) might help explain the difference between Tonga and Fiji. Complicating any analysis, however, is the fact that the Australasian Conference had proved sympathetic if not insistent about developments towards autonomy.

The conclusion has been pressing its way inexorably forward throughout these pages: Fijian ministers were no closer to owning their church in 1880 than they had been 20 years previously. In fact, the missionaries in Fiji made conscious decisions throughout the 1870s to relegate the opinions of Fijian ministers to the background. These missionaries moved forward with blurred vision, or, in the well-known biblical phrase, they viewed events 'through a glass darkly'.⁴⁹ Their determination to retain ownership of the Fijian church led inevitably — and in many respects regrettably — to a missionary-dominated church agenda for the next half-century, an agenda that was to be increasingly out of touch with the needs and aspirations of Fijian people.

Footnotes

- 1 The Wesleyan Methodists were not the first Christian missionaries in Fiji; three Tahitian ‘teachers’ sponsored by the London Missionary Society (LMS) arrived at Lakeba in 1830. In 1838, after negotiations between the LMS and the Methodists, the latter assumed full responsibility for Fiji, including support of the Tahitian teachers. Throughout this article, I have used the briefer term ‘Methodist’ rather than ‘Wesleyan Methodist’. I am indebted to Dr Max Quanchi of the Queensland University of Technology for his helpful and extensive comments on the first draft of this chapter.
- 2 The Methodists were the only significant missionary organisation in Fiji during the years under discussion. Roman Catholic priests arrived in Fiji in 1844 but their endeavours met with little success until the late 19th century.
- 3 See Niel Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas* (Melbourne, 1978); J. Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania* (Suva, 1982); A. Harold Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church, Vol. II, Fiji* (Alderagate, Melbourne, 1978); A. Thornley and T. Vulaono, *The Inheritance of Hope* (Suva, 2000), *Exodus of Me I Taukei* (Suva, 2002), *A Shaking of the Land* (Suva, forthcoming).
- 4 Rev. Dr R. B. Lyth, *Journal*, September 24, 1948, B 536 (1), Mitchell Library (ML); and *Journal*, December 10, 1853, B 451, ML. Joeli Bulu, a Tongan missionary, worked in Fiji from 1838 until his death in 1877. He spoke fluent Fijian and his second wife was Fijian. He was indisputably the foremost indigenous missionary of this period. The outstanding Fijian missionary, Josna Mateinaniu, who began Christian work in Rewa and Cakaudrove, died in the 1850s. See articles by Thornley and Baleiwaqa in Andrew Thornley and Tauga Vulaono (eds), *Mai Kea ‘Ki Vei?: Stories of Methodism in Fiji and Rotuma* (Suva, 1996).
- 5 Rev. R. Young, *The Southern World: Journal of a Deputation from the Wesleyan Conference* (London, 1655), pp. 296–7. Throughout this article the phrase ‘Fijian ministers’ includes the dozen or so ordained Tongan missionaries.
- 6 Lyth, *Journal*, November 6, 1853, B 451, ML; Young, *The Southern World*, pp. 296–7.
- 7 *Wesleyan Missionary Notices*, March–August, 1854. Rather than use the nomenclature of the time, such as ‘Native Assistant Missionary’, ‘Native Missionary’ or the subsequently adopted term ‘Native Minister’, I have in this chapter chosen to use the terms ‘indigenous minister’ or ‘Fijian minister’; however, when quoting from source material, the original terms have been retained.
- 8 Methodist Church of Australasia: Minutes of the Australasian General Conference, 1955, Methodist Church of Australia Collection (MCA), 560, ML.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Young, *The Southern World*, p. 254.

- 11 Fiji District Minutes (FDM), Methodist Overseas Missions (MOM) 7, ML. It is worth noting that missionary opinion was not dissimilar to educated European opinion; for example, writing at the turn of the century, the anthropologist Basil Thomson observed that 'in most respects the Fijian is some centuries behind us and it is unreasonable to expect them to leap the gap at a single bound'. *The Fijians: A Study in the Decay of Custom* (London, 1908), pp. 2–3.
- 12 For further detail on the growth of the Methodist Church in this period, see Wood, *Overseas Missions*; Garrett, *To Live Among*; and A. W. Thornley, 'Fijian Methodism, 1874–1945', PhD thesis, The Australian National University (Canberra, 1979), Chapter 1.
- 13 FDM, 1963, MOM 8, ML.
- 14 FDM, 1866, MOM 9, ML.
- 15 FDM, 1868, MOM 9; FDM, 1869–70, MOM 10–11, ML. See also Minutes of Australasian Methodist Conference, MCA 580, ML.
- 16 F. Langham to S. Rabone, June 18 and December 3, 1872, MOM 103, ML.
- 17 Minutes of Australasian Methodist Conference, 1873, MCA 580, ML.
- 18 Carey to B. Chapman, 29 April 1873, MOM 165, ML.
- 19 Leggoe to B. Chapman, 19 August 1873, MOM 98, ML. Leggoe was probably referring to the recent *tags* initiative in Papua New Guinea.
- 20 Leggoe to B. Chapman, December 20, 1873, MOM 96, ML.
- 21 FDM, 1873, MOM 12, ML.
- 22 B. Chapman to Langham, May 27, 1874, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Letterbook, 1874–6, A2805, ML.
- 23 Letter enclosed in Waterhouse to B. Chapman, October 31, 1874, MOM 100, ML.
- 24 See three letters of Waterhouse to Chapman, undated, 1873; December 26, 1874 and February 20, 1875, MOM 100, ML.
- 25 Minutes of Tongan District Meeting, 1874–5, MOM 13–14, ML.
- 26 Waterhouse to Chapman, June 2, 1875; see also Waterhouse to S. Wilkinson, November 19, 1875, MOM 100, ML.
- 27 Waterhouse to Wilkinson, *ibid.*
- 28 Carey to I. Rooney, May 2, 1873, B 440, ML.
- 29 Langham to B. Chapman, November 2 and 19, 1875, MOM 103, ML.
- 30 Waterhouse to Chapman, June 23, 1875 and December 1, 1875, MOM 100, ML. See also FDM 1876, MOM 14–16, ML. There was little real substance to Waterhouse's claim once it had been investigated.
- 31 Fison to Chapman, December 29, 1875, MOM 104, ML.
- 32 Langham to Chapman, November 2, 1875, MOM 103, ML.
- 33 Fison to Chapman, October 27, 1875, MOM 104, ML.
- 34 Waterhouse to S. Wilkinson, November 19, 1875, MOM 100, ML.
- 35 Fison to Chapman, October 31, 1875, MOM 104, ML.
- 36 Enclosed in Waterhouse to Chapman, December 21, 1875, MOM 100, ML.

- 37 B. Chapman to Langham, June 22, 1876, A 2805, ML. Chapman to Rev. Daniel, July 20, 1976, MOM 39, ML. FDM, 1876, MOM 14, ML. Minutes of the Australasian Methodist Conference 1876 enclosed in Missionary Society Board Minutes, July 18, 1876, MOM 1–2, ML.
- 38 Langham to Chapman, July 15, 1976, MOM 103, ML.
- 39 FDM, 1876, MOM 14–16, ML.
- 40 I. Rooney to Chapman, April 17, 1876, MOM 165, ML.
- 41 Langham to Chapman, July 15, 1876, MOM 103, ML.
- 42 Fison to Chapman, May 11, 1876, MOM 104; Fison to J. Calvert, n.d. (Plate 1876), Doc. 2361, ML.
- 43 The recommendation to accept this principle came from the NSW and Queensland Conference.
- 44 FDM, 1879, MOM 16, ML.
- 45 FDM, 1876, MOM 14–16, ML.
- 46 See A. W. Thornley, 'Custom, Change and Conflict: Fijian Wesleyan Ministers, 1835–1945' in R. J. May and H. Nelson (eds), *Melanesia: Beyond Diversity, Vol. I* (Canberra, 1982), pp. 123–38; note, in particular, the experience of Rev. Tomasi Naceba.
- 47 See, for example, *An Open Letter from the Fiji District Meeting to the Ministers of the Australian Wesleyan Methodist Church — November 1888*, ML; and Langham to George Brown, June 15, 1900, MOM 166, ML.
- 48 Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Penguin, 1964) pp. 514–5.
- 49 I Corinthians 13: 11–12.

A Church in Papua or a Papuan Church?

Conservatism and Resistance to Indigenous Leadership in a Melanesian Mission

Ross Mackay

On June 19, 1891, what was probably the largest ever pioneer missionary group arrived at Dobu, a small island in the D'Entrecasteaux Group off the south-eastern tip of the mainland of Papua New Guinea. Organised by the Methodist Overseas Missions in Australia, the group comprised 69 people: eight Europeans (including one child), 10 Samoan, four Tongan and six Fijian couples with a total of 12 children, and nine unmarried Fijian men. The leader was the Reverend William Bromilow from Victoria, Australia, a man with previous Pacific missionary experience in Fiji.

This new British New Guinea District (after 1901 known as the Papua District) was, according to Methodist practice, a district of the NSW Methodist Conference and its organisation quickly mirrored that relationship. It held annual synods and was represented by the Mission Board at the annual NSW Methodist Conference in Sydney and the triennial Methodist General Conference. In its first 40 years, the mission expanded rapidly from Dobu to all the major

island groups of the Milne Bay Province: D'Entrecasteaux, Trobriand, Marshall Bennett, Louisiade Archipelago, Engineers and to the mainland at East Cape.

The religious idea that lay behind the mission was the transformation of Melanesian culture through the introduction of Christian presence and teaching. This was exemplified by Bromilow who stated it thus: 'We aimed at saving ... not by reconstructions from without but by regeneration from within; we sought not to abolish but to redeem.'¹ The means to that end were to successfully introduce Methodist teaching and practice.

The arrival in the Milne Bay Province of the Catholic missionaries in 1930 should have been a catalyst for the already well-established Methodists to become more progressive and to hasten their often claimed objective of giving power to indigenous church leaders. This was not the case, however, and the period from 1930 to 1960 was a time of conservatism. For a number of reasons there was an unwillingness to change how the mission functioned or to consider the Melanesian world view in their teaching. Leadership within the mission, longevity of missionaries in the field and an inflexible education system created a conservatism that, at the end of the period, quickly crumbled when change was forced.

First and foremost was the leadership of the mission, especially the role of the Chairman of the District. In the home church, the chairmanship was an office in which the real interest lay in securing ministers for circuits within the district. Because ministers (and this included chairmen) usually served a circuit for no more than five years, the role was quite transitory. In the mission districts, the practice was quite different. Missionaries were usually long-term appointments and the chairman was chosen from amongst the most experienced and senior of them. He was also the conduit between the missionaries and the Mission Board. If information is power, then the chairman had it absolutely. It is a supreme irony that the Australasian Methodist Church, which had

always eschewed the episcopacy, had in the office of chairman of a mission district a figure who could exercise more power than any bishop could expect. A bishop had prescribed powers; a Methodist chairman had whatever powers he decided to take for himself. To the Papuan, a chairman was a *tonugana sinabwana*,² an equivalent of the Melanesian 'big man'.

From 1930 to 1960, the Papua District had five chairmen: the Reverends Matthew Gilmour (1909–19; 1923–33), J. Ron Andrew (1934–38; 1945–47), John Rundle (1939–42), Hedley Shotton (1947–53), and Ralph Grant (1953–61). Each one had distinctive abilities and left his own legacy. Gilmour was, next to the pioneer William Bromilow, the most revered of all the missionaries to have served in Papua but was, in the latter period of his tenure, much disliked by his missionary colleagues who saw him as distant, disloyal to them and increasingly given to eccentricities.³ Andrew was quiet, gentle, popular with his colleagues and their requested choice as Gilmour's replacement. Rundle was passionate and volatile; Shotton was scholarly and deep; Grant was a prolific worker who had some difficulties with younger missionaries keen to make changes.

In each of these personalities and their lengthy periods of service in Papua lay the seeds of conservatism that pervaded the district. Gilmour's lengthy time in Papua was notable for his commitment to the idea of 'industrial mission' and he subsumed most of his effort into the development of technical infrastructure in the district. Most of the small launches, necessary for travel, were designed and made under his tuition; the building of large, commodious outstation houses, and of the large headquarters at Salamo on southern Fergusson, were results of his leadership.

But Gilmour was unwilling to advance Papuans into positions of leadership. While he had trained them in the trades, he could not accept that they were capable of any excellence. The most they were capable of was to be 'generally useful with tools, not

perhaps as carpenters pure and simple [but] handy men'.⁴ This assessment, made early during his time in Papua, was never changed. He rationalised why Papuans could not take over leadership of the technical training, declaring them to be 'very neat and expert craftsmen, capable of executing accurate and well finished work but their difficulty will lie in their lack of a spirit of steady plodding enterprise'.⁵

When the Government introduced financial grants to support technical training, an inspection report on Gilmour's work at Salamo was extremely critical because it lacked any reasonable standard of classroom instruction, and necessary subjects such as technical drawing were not taught. There seemed to be no precision or excellence taught; for example, students were told the index finger represented three inches.

Later, a report commissioned by the Mission Board after calls for Gilmour's recall by his colleagues, was damning about his method of boat construction. Conducted by Charles Sparrow, one of Australia's foremost marine experts, the report declared the boats were 'deplorable ... there is nothing tying the sides [of the vessels] together'.⁶

As head of the mission, Gilmour had overseen the development of excellent technical training facilities but, in contrast, in what was always under-funded work, other major areas of the mission's activities suffered. When Gilmour left in 1933, there was still no classroom in which to train village pastors and teachers — what was traditionally seen as the important work of the mission. In 1921, Gilmour had prevailed on the board to let him build a new headquarters at Salamo. He predicted this would allow an additional 97 pastoral workers to be trained at any one time, yet by 1933 there was a total of only 84 in the district with just 27 in training.

Gilmour was an autocratic and domineering leader. When a qualified medical practitioner was appointed to Salamo, Gilmour insisted on exercising final authority over medical matters just as he

did with all other branches of the work. Inevitably, this led to friction and then outright hostility from his colleagues. Advancing age (in 1930 he was 58) and some irritating eccentricities, coupled with a widespread disaffection in his leadership, saw the staff ask for his removal.⁷ Of particular concern was the treatment of one colleague, Rev. Ron Walker, who had arrived in Papua in 1927. To Gilmour, he was an 'earnest young man' but weak, a judgment based on Walker's detestation of sea travel. Gilmour was intolerant of such frailty and insisted Walker take long sea journeys that other colleagues were more willing to undertake.

In 1931, Walker, while at Kiriwina, saw his wife horribly burnt by an exploding kerosene icebox. The only vessel available for hire was a local sailing cutter in which Walker, his wife and four-year-old son set sail for Salamo Hospital. The journey took 36 hours, with only aspirin to ease the pain of burns that covered 80 per cent of her body. On arrival at hospital, and with the doctor away on patrol, the nurses prepared to operate, but Mrs Walker died before they could. Gilmour refused to allow a nursing sister, due for furlough a month later, permission to accompany Walker and his son to Sydney. This, coupled with his dismissal of the family's trauma as just 'a few hours of suffering', angered his colleagues.⁸

Conscious of the ill feeling, evident at the annual synod meeting that year, described as 'very poor spirited, very panicky and very distrustful', Gilmour offered his resignation to the board's general secretary, John W. Burton, who refused it, hoping a longer stay would resolve the differences and put Gilmour in a more 'dignified' position.⁹ Gilmour, always proud, wrote, 'I hope you won't mention dignity again. I know you meant it kindly, but it does grate. Bolstered up dignity I hate ...'¹⁰

Gilmour was eventually recalled, leaving in July 1933. His impending departure gave rise to a sense of paranoia among the missionary staff and a strike in his support by the students. The

Rev. John Rundle, the most outspoken of the missionaries, suggested they should sing 'O for the skin of a rhino and the heart of a lion', going on to say:

It will soon be over and then the resurrection of Salamo will commence but I think it will be preceded by a Golgotha of a sort. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth here if the [Papuan] teachers have their way. I don't know if we can stop it so we expect a flood.¹¹

In withdrawing Gilmour, the board recognised that the Mission had failed to advance adequately. There was, after 43 years, still no Papuan being considered for ordination. Under Gilmour, leadership was secretive, absolute and lacking in vision. A review conducted by Burton and J. W. Kitto, a leading Methodist layman, found Salamo lacked buoyancy and there was an air of discontent among the population.¹²

At the urging of the white male missionaries, the board called Rev. Ron Andrew to take over. Andrew had previously served in Papua for 10 years at Panaeati (1919-29). By his appointment, the board was appeasing the missionaries and ensuring a continuation of the kind of conservative leadership it had always had. Andrew was a man with a pastoral heart who believed the proper task of missionary endeavour was to transform Melanesian culture from within. In his first report as chairman, he wrote:

The greater part of our district has been missionised continuously for a long period. Government and commercial influences have also played their part, and one cannot help but feel that the next decade or so will see big changes in native life and outlook.

In their outer aspects, tribal organisation and native custom have been little touched by the coming of the white man, but one feels that, in the inner realm, the bases of native belief have so altered that the driving force has gone.

Christianity has proved, in many a native heart, the new power for righteousness and love that can transform and uplift the people. That it has a large and ever growing influence in moulding native thought is evident, and it is a matter for deep thankfulness. It is our task and privilege to do all we can to foster this inward growth in Christian ideals, till it has spread itself through all the ramifications of native custom and belief. This quiet intensive work is the task of the Church in this District today, and it calls for our best in sympathy and understanding, in consecrated effort and devotion.¹³

Andrew was like Gilmour in that he, too, advocated dignity for Melanesians but gave no responsibility to them in their own church. There was none of the earlier 'passion for souls' but platitudinous talk of 'divine progress; divine things; forming ideals; following the Master'; and of the need to 'smile, live and weep religion'.¹⁴

Given that Gilmour was chairman for 22 years and Andrew for nine and that they, together with Bromilow, led the mission for its first 50 years, it is not surprising that the first two Papuan candidates for the ministry, Kelebi Toginitu (Tubetube) and Inosi Ugwalubu (Kiriwina), did not present themselves until 1936, 45 years after the start of the mission.

After the departure of Andrew in 1938, Rev. John Rundle was appointed chairman. A missionary on Goodenough Island since 1927, Rundle, a believer in cricket as a means of introducing Papuans to the wider, 'civilised' world, placed a strong emphasis on grassroots village missionisation. Rundle had little time to influence policies. He went on furlough in late 1941, then, shortly after, the war came to Papua New Guinea and the various missionary bodies in Papua were ordered to evacuate their staff.¹⁵ The first order, on December 15, 1941, saw the departure of married women and children. Then on January 25, 1942, a second telegram, ordering the departure of all remaining missionaries, was received by acting chairman, Rev. Ralph Grant, who instructed his remaining European staff to leave.

The Catholics also obeyed the instruction, but the Anglicans, under the coaxing of Bishop Philip Strong, refused to go. The arrival of the Methodist evacuees in Sydney created considerable debate and mutterings of cowardice and desertion from within the church. General Secretary John W. Burton strongly defended the missionaries but was critical of them on two grounds: that the order to evacuate was not binding, and that the Pacific Island missionaries had not been included by their white colleagues in the evacuation.

Strong, in Samarai, had learnt that the evacuation order could not be applied to missionaries and a subsequent Royal Commission into events surrounding the takeover of the colonial administration by the Australia New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU) concluded that the evacuation order was the unlawful action of the senior officer, Lieutenant Sydney Elliott Smith, who wanted civilians out of the way.¹⁶

Among the harshest critics of the Methodist evacuation was Rundle. In private communication with Burton, he made charges that Burton described as 'serious' and which caused the General Secretary to contact several colonial officials including Leonard Murray in Port Moresby and the Resident Magistrate in Samarai, R. A. Woodward. Rundle, a friend of Strong, based his criticism on Strong's advocacy of the non-evacuation of the Anglican staff. Whatever was said, a special board meeting resolved that the missionaries deserved no blame and Rundle was called on to accept that decision.¹⁷

Permission for missionaries to return was delayed by the ANGAU authorities for almost two years. As early as July 1942, Burton wanted to negotiate with the authorities in Papua for the return of the male missionaries.¹⁸ This was just prior to the main hostilities in the district. On July 22, the Japanese landed at Buna and Gona, and five weeks later they were in Milne Bay itself. That the board persisted with its efforts even after the Japanese attacks

— always being refused on the grounds that the district was an operational area — suggests Burton still considered the January evacuation unnecessary.

The board described the authorities' refusal to allow the return of missionaries as 'obdurate'.¹⁹ The Anglicans had refused to leave in the January, only to do so in late August after a number of them had been killed by the Japanese. Soon after, their leaders began pressing for the return of women missionaries, achieving this by December 1943; but, in what was seen as gender bias, the first Methodist women not given permission to return until January 1945.

The Methodist men were allowed to return at intervals. First came Ern Clarke and Harry Bartlett to Misima in November 1943, then Henry Williams to East Cape the next January. Salamo welcomed John Dixon in November 1944 and in January 1945 Ron Andrew returned, together with six single women. Kiriwina was not opened up by the authorities until Hedley Shotton arrived in 1946. Of those who returned, only Bartlett, Williams and the six women had been evacuees. No new missionaries were sent; the others — Dixon, Clarke, Andrew and Shotton — had all previously retired from missionary service before January 1942 and were now prevailed on to return.

The fact that the post-evacuation mission was led by former missionaries ensured its conservatism. These missionaries carried out their vocation as they had done before, with the same plan, mind-set and attitudes as they had previously. They were not young and sought only to carry on the work as they had always known it. It was not a time for change, otherwise those changes could have happened in their previous service.

After Rundle's death in 1943, a result of complications of injuries sustained in a road accident while serving as a chaplain in northern Australia, Andrew was prevailed on to return as chairman. He and his colleagues were faced with almost insurmountable obstacles. ANGAU had conscripted all the mission's property into

the war effort. What was left of its plant and equipment at Salamo was unserviceable; the hospital had been denuded of its furnishings, and the boats, though returned, were in poor repair and mostly unseaworthy. It took many years to begin to get the boats in regular service; in 1951, boat maintenance and repairs totalled £9,336 while the cost of missionary staff was £8,214.²⁰

It was impossible for the missionaries to give adequate time and attention to their circuits. In 1952, the board made a significant investment in the district's future when it purchased the 58 foot *Koonwarra*, a trading vessel well known along the coast of Papua. It did not come near to solving the overall problem of transport, but it was a great resource and became the visible symbol of the church all over the district.

At the time of the evacuation it was claimed that Salamo had the best hospital in the country but its equipment was removed during the war to furnish and equip a new government hospital at Mapamoiwa on north-west Fergusson.²¹ The Salamo technical workshops were stripped of all plant and equipment leaving 'forlorn empty buildings, depressing indeed'.²² By 1949, there were still only a few tools and no machinery in the workshops. The War Claims Commission eventually paid the board a total of £3,500 for the boats (though they had to pay £900 to buy back three of them), £2,246 for plant and £1,387 for 'deterioration and occupation'.²³ Needless to say, such amounts were inadequate to rebuild the whole infrastructure of the mission. Consequently, the mission was operating from a position of material weakness.

The return after the war should have caused the leaders of the mission to rethink its future, for they knew there would be fewer missionaries available because of needs elsewhere, especially in the New Guinea Islands District where all but two of its male leaders had been killed during the war. The board's often repeated call for development of local leadership, which the Papua District had left unheeded, was now the only way the mission could

maintain its presence over such a large area. However, this did not happen, primarily because those who came to lead the mission were the same people who had been its prewar leaders.

While the returnees were all men of proven ability, the district gained few new ideas from them. None were young; their earlier retirements from Papua had been because of ill health and the heavy physical toll missionary life exacted. By returning they were only exposing themselves, and the district, to more of the same. And a number of them did not stay long. Henry Williams had gone by January 1944 and Harry Bartlett went six months later. John Dixon followed and when Andrew departed in late 1947 only Clarke remained of those who had returned. At times there were only two ministers in the district.

Another prevailed on to return was Rev. Hedley Shotton, former missionary at Kiriwina (1932–38). He returned in 1946 to the Trobriands then moved to Dobu in 1947 to take over as chairman from Andrew, a position he held until his retirement in 1953. Shotton was the most scholarly of all the Methodist missionaries in Papua and was the only one to have a postgraduate degree, from Melbourne University. His chairmanship was notable for his gentle and compassionate nature, and he was later described as ‘full of meekness and amazingly patient with his brethren’.²⁴

Shotton’s quiet academic manner sometimes confused his colleagues, used, as they were, to a more rugged style of chairman. When he suggested to one that ‘a little [political] pinkness wouldn’t do any harm’, her response was to say, ‘I tread warily. I’m not an MA.’²⁵ But his personality did not equip Shotton to deal adequately with difficult colleagues and he had a strained relationship with one in particular, Rev. Ralph Grant.

Acting chairman at the time of the evacuation, Grant applied in 1944 to return to Papua, permission for which he did not gain until 1947. Despite repeated attempts to return, the board kept rejecting him. At first, they suggested that his ‘domestic

arrangements' (a reference to his children's educational needs) should be placed first, then it was his 'important position' in a team ministry at Broken Hill, followed by a 'review' of his situation until finally they informed him they wanted younger men.²⁶

These reasons were clearly unsatisfactory. The board's policy was to assist financially the education of missionaries' children either in church schools or to stay with family members. No appointment was beyond the board's power of persuasion and Broken Hill held no particular prestige that could not be dealt with. The argument over age was obviously spurious. Already the board had requested Clarke, Dixon, Andrew and Shotton to return and had accepted offers to return from Bartlett, Williams and Alfred Guy. Each was older than Grant and had served in Papua longer. Permission to return finally came in 1947, but only after Grant's former colleague and now State Secretary for Overseas Missions, Harry Bartlett, warned the board that South Australia would view Grant's rejection 'unfavourably' and this would put at risk financial support from that state for the board's work.²⁷

There were three likely reasons for the board's refusal of Grant. He was still held responsible for the evacuation and thereby judged to be a poor leader. This was, by any reading, unfair. Second, he was respected but not always liked by some of his missionary colleagues who saw him and his wife as too dominating to be good leaders of the mission. The other reason was that some of the Grants' attitudes towards Papuans — attitudes that were more common in the Thirties than the Fifties — were a constant source of embarrassment to their colleagues. Washing after touch, berating mistakes and public verbal admonishments by the Grants embarrassed their colleagues and were resented by Papuans.²⁸

Yet the Grants were people of considerable charm and ability. Ralph Grant was an outstanding linguist, perhaps next to Dixon in his knowledge of the Dobuan language, but better than any in translation. A prolific worker, over the years he translated

and printed on a small hand-platen press at East Cape hundreds of copies of books. He proved to be an excellent teacher in this and ANGAU took his five printing press workers to Port Moresby for the duration of the war. His personal influence on these five was formative. One, Robert Budiara, became the first Papuan chairman and then the inaugural bishop; another, Robert Duigu, was one of the first Papuans to be ordained, while a third, Simeon Busia, was one of the first certificated teachers. The other two, Polonga Edoni and Nelson Kainamale, remained leading laymen in the church. Grant's translations and publishing were in addition to his regular circuit duties and his office of chairman, both of which required extensive sea travel. Grant's chairmanship was exercised from East Cape, the first and only time in the mission's history that the seat of power had been outside the Dobu area. Unkindly, but probably accurately, it was suggested that this was because none of their colleagues at Salamo wanted the Grants near them.²⁹

The Grants ran a tight household in which Dawn Grant trained women in household duties. Her reputation in the small European population of Samarai, the government and commercial centre for the province, was a byword for hospitality and style not usually found in the tropics. Critics overlooked the fact that their service in Papua was costly for them, separating them for years from their children — a price they were prepared to pay but which proved difficult for all family members.

Their colleagues respected the Grants, whose hard work and prolific results were evident to all, but the personal problems they had with them outweighed everything else. One wrote of the Grants' 'terrible jealousy' over Shotton's appointment as chairman which 'almost wrecked the 1948 synod meetings'. On another occasion it was suggested that their purpose in being in the district was to be 'grace producers' among the rest of the staff.³⁰ They tried to exercise too much control over the lives of their colleagues and considerable resistance built up. On one occasion an urgent visit by one

missionary wife to the Samarai doctor was thwarted as the boat passed East Cape because previous permission had not been obtained for the trip. Having already endured a 10-hour trip in rough seas, the couple was not prepared to obey the order to return, but the Papuan skipper was not willing to endure the consequences.³¹

As chairman, Ralph Grant's real problem, apart from his abrupt manner and an atmosphere of disharmony created by a dominating personality, was his lack of a vision for the future. Grant elevated, and even invented, issues of no importance that stifled opportunities for a closer relationship between whites and Papuans. On one occasion, he petitioned the board to prohibit ordained Papuan clergy from wearing the clerical collar. The board responded that it was proper for the indigenous church to decide such matters, at the same time reminding Grant that it would appear to be an 'invidious distinction' to deny Papuan ministers the right to wear a clerical collar if their European colleagues wore them.³²

The district had a set of bylaws, regulations begun in 1938, which governed the requirements for church membership, training procedures for all church workers, criteria for selection of every educational, medical, technical and theological candidate. These regulations had strong moral strictures, including the instruction that no girl or woman not a family member could sleep in the house of any male 'native agent'. In 1940, the synod had decreed that all ministers and candidates for the ministry 'shall give his promise' that he abstain from betel-nut chewing and be questioned on this each synod. Against Grant's strong objection, the 1953 synod overturned this by one vote, substituting instead that ministers be required to promise to use betel nut 'in moderation only'.³³ Almost immediately, candidates began presenting themselves for the ministry.

These forms of discipline held back the development of indigenous leadership as did the requirements for candidature. To become a minister, a Papuan needed to have been a catechist for at

least five years — amended in 1955 to two years — then six years of probation while he studied. But the road to being a catechist was a protracted one in itself and usually came after 10 years as a village teacher. In addition, all teachers, catechists and ministers were forbidden to undertake any new obligation in the *kula* and should resign from it ‘as soon as he receives his own’.³⁴ So difficult was the whole process that it was not until 1946 that the first Papuan minister, Kelebi Toginitu, was ordained. By 1957, there were only six Papuan ministers.

Shortage of staff and an inability by the board to gain new missionaries undergirded the conservative years. Between 1943 and 1953, only six new missionary ministers were recruited for Papua and two of these, with trade skills, were appointed to the Technical Department at Salamo. Of the other four, one returned to Australia after three years and was not replaced. The repeated requests for new staff were met with the standard board response of ‘not possible’. The board had taken on a new responsibility to missionise in the newly opened Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea and this, together with the need to replace almost the entire male contingent in the New Guinea Islands District, who had perished as prisoners-of-war aboard the *Montevideo Maru*, took most of the energy and recruits that the board could find.

Pacific Islander missionaries served in this mission from its beginnings in 1891 until 1980. During the evacuation period they led it and, overall, their influence was far more pervasive than the European missionaries at the village level. But they were not given opportunities to exert overall leadership. They were acknowledged for their role in the war years, they served for longer periods than their European contemporaries, but they were never given authority over those same colleagues.³⁵ Their education was seen as inferior and their standard of training for missionary work of a lesser quality. A number of them came to Papua as teachers, were ordained while serving as missionaries, but they were not given

superintendency of a circuit — they only ever served under an Australian superintendent. Until the rapid changes in organisation and leadership in the Sixties, these same Pacific Islanders were described as ‘native ministers’. Colour, it seems, meant less ability and intelligence.

No mission in Papua New Guinea existed without schools. After the war, the Methodist Mission operated two kinds of schools: vernacular (village) schools and the Circuit Training Institution (CTI). Vernacular schools were preparatory, conducted in each village where there was a pastor or paid helper. It was a good idea that produced little of educational excellence. In 1951, for example, there were 8,433 vernacular school students in the district, of which Duau had 1,655 and Bwaidoga 1,741. Yet neither place had ever seen a trained teacher except for one year at Bwaidoga. The result of such a policy across the district was ‘the appallingly low standard’ of so-called teachers and paid helpers. ‘Those who have never had the opportunity of good schooling are in no position to educate others,’ the synod declared.³⁶ Yet seven years later, the same criticisms were still being made. On Kiriwina, the Government Education Officer recommended that the third- to fifth-grade students be dismissed and younger children be concentrated on. Youths aged 10 to 14 were turning up to start school, a practice common in all parts of the district.³⁷ The practical problem was that a proper school education required most children becoming boarders but parents were reluctant to allow their children to leave home before puberty.

The board fully understood the education problem but its response was inadequate. Burton’s successor as board general secretary, Alf Gardner, visited Papua in 1947 and described the village education system as ‘rudimentary’ and the results as ‘lamentable’.³⁸ Gardner, who had no missionary experience, correctly saw that the only way forward was through education in English. His successor, Cecil Gribble, likewise reported on the poor

level of education, inadequate standards and its corollary, 'the weakness of the trained ministry'.³⁹ There was considerable resistance in the D'Entrecasteaux Islands to education in English; after all their language was the mission's lingua franca. Those missionaries working in the area saw teaching in Dobuan as preserving the culture and a necessary thing in transforming the culture from within. But in distant places such as Kiriwina and Misima there was a desire to get away from Dobuan. Yet the standard of English teaching in the various CTIs was poor. When an experienced volunteer missionary tested the highest grade in the Misima School, in a class of 35 there was a total vocabulary of 104 English words. The best student knew only 14 words and sentence construction was not possible. After three months of instruction in sentence construction using vocabulary already known, 17 students could correctly use a total vocabulary of 216 words.⁴⁰

The board's response to the education morass was to appoint an educationalist, Bruce Walkeden Brown, to do 'special education work',⁴¹ a euphemism for setting up a proper school and breaking the village school nexus. But the board was unable or unwilling to provide enough of the resources needed to see this through properly and the missionaries themselves failed to heed Andrew's earlier warning that entry into education could no longer be primarily just for those who wanted to work in the church,⁴² an issue only Shotton tried to force. Brown, the first layperson to head education in the district, opened a Boys' High School at Dobu in 1951, which was moved to Bwaruada and then to Salamo in 1958, when it became co-educational. When Grant became chairman, there was no attempt to move any further forward in educational policy, a policy that had existed since early in the century: village schools were to feed the brighter students into the CTI with the hope that some would then enter the District Training Institution (DTI) to train as village pastors and then go back to teach in the village schools.

Two changes outside the mission forced the Methodists to face the real issues on education. The first was the growing popularity of the Catholic schools, whose language of instruction was English. The Catholics, who made a permanent start to their work in 1932, soon realised that their only chance of making a major impact was through school education, especially when they had an adequate supply of sisters and brothers to staff them with instruction in English.

The second change was in government policy. The greatly expanded government budget for Papua New Guinea after the war saw education, most of which was done by missions, given top priority. Government policy was to offer grants-in-aid to agencies employing qualified teachers. This policy required English as the language of instruction and, in 1956, it introduced a tri-level register of teachers: 'A' certificated teachers, qualified to teach the lower grades, attracted a subsidy of \$80 per annum, 'B' certificate, \$120 and European teachers (later, as Papuans became qualified to teach Standard 6, known as 'C' certificate), \$800.

This policy was intended to induce missions to raise their standards. Two years later the Government tightened its regulations by a reclassification of schools, which required the closure of any school that did not have a Papuan certificated teacher or one with a permit to teach. Methodist schools had a high proportion of pastors who had never been trained — Dobu, for example, had its first certificated teacher in 1957. Many village schools closed and there was a focus on schools on mission stations and in only the larger villages. The new policy meant the end for the village school system. Within a decade village schools ceased to exist.

By 1961, Ralph Grant had gone, recalled by the board. With his departure, but not necessarily because of it, a great transformation was about to overcome the mission. Circuits were made smaller, Pacific Islander missionaries were treated as equals and given the same opportunities of leadership as whites, the

requirements for entry into theological training were relaxed, young men and, now, women without previous pastoral experience were accepted for ordination, and educational entry standards were introduced. Papuans and Pacific Islanders were put in charge of circuits and the synod meetings were dominated by Papuans. All this resulted, in just seven years, in independence from the Australian church and, then, its integration into the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, an act that took place in January 1968. From being a church in Papua, the Methodist Overseas Mission was finally a Papuan church.

Footnotes

- 1 W. E. Bromilow, *Twenty Years Among Primitive Papuans* (New York, 1977), p. 113.
- 2 *Tonugana* = Dobuan for leader, literally 'the leader on the track'; *sinabwana* = big or important.
- 3 A fuller treatment of Gilmour is contained in Ross Mackay, 'Gilmour of Papua: An Estimation of a Methodist Missionary Leader, 1901–1933', *South Pacific Journal of Mission Studies* (December 1991), pp. 17–20.
- 4 *Missionary Review* (June 1907), p. 16.
- 5 *Annual Report*, 1925 Synod, MOM (Methodist Overseas Mission archives, Mitchell Library, Sydney), file 193.
- 6 *Annual Report*, 1933 Synod, MOM 201. Sparrow was later superintendent of Australia's premier dockyard, Cockatoo Island in Sydney.
- 7 The most well known was the purloining of clothes belonging to other missionaries. At Salamo, where most of the missionaries were single people, personal clothing was washed by students' wives. The Gilmours supervised this and would take items that appealed to them, oblivious to the reaction.
- 8 *Annual Report*, 1932 Synod, MOM 200.
- 9 Notes on the 1931 Synod Minutes, MOM 199.
- 10 Gilmour to Burton December 20, 1932, UC (United Church Archives, University of PNG), Box 35, file 4.
- 11 Rundle to Dixon 1.6.1933, UC Box 35, file 5.
- 12 Full report contained in MOM 201.
- 13 Report to 1934 Synod, MOM 202.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 For a fuller account of this period see Ross Mackay, 'The War Years: Methodists in Papua 1942–1945', *Journal of Pacific History*, 27, 1 (June 1982), pp. 29–43.
- 16 J. V. Barry, *Commission of Enquiry into the Circumstances Relating to the Suspension of Civil Administration in the Territory of Papua, 1942*, Australian War Memorial, file number e 355, 02895 6M.
- 17 Minutes of Special Executive Meeting May 27, 1942, MOM 339.
- 18 Board Minutes July 10, 1942, MOM 339
- 19 Executive Committee minutes September 17, 1942; Board Minutes March 18, 1943, MOM 339.
- 20 *Annual Report*, 1952 Synod, MOM 360.
- 21 Ellen Kettle, *That They Might Live* (Sydney, 1979), pp. 98, 117.
- 22 J. R. A. Andrew, *Annual Report*, Synod 1945, MOM 353.
- 23 Board Minutes June 14, 1946; Executive Committee Minutes July 10, 1946, MOM 340, September 11, 1947, MOM 341.

- 24 Annual Board of Mission minutes 16.2.1954, MOM 344.
- 25 Rita Berry, correspondence to Peg July 11, 1949, uncatalogued papers in Mitchell Library.
- 26 Board of Mission minutes August 14, 1944, MOM 344; Appointment and Training Committee minutes May 10, July 5 and December 9, 1946, MOM 340.
- 27 Appointments and Training Committee minutes January 6, 1946, MOM 340.
- 28 One such incident involved Sikaru, the captain of the chairman's boat, *Eliam*. In an interview in 1970 (a decade after the event), he told how, coming in to the anchorage one day, Mrs Grant berated him in a loud voice, declaring, 'Your brain is like a rock.' He had no idea what she was referring to.
- 29 Rita Berry, correspondence, November 15, 1947, uncatalogued papers in Mitchell Library.
- 30 Rita Berry, correspondence to Peg November 27, 1948; November 15, 1947, uncatalogued papers in Mitchell Library.
- 31 Interview, Rev. Harry Robinson, Sydney, 1967.
- 32 Executive Committee minutes, July 11, 1956, MOM 345.
- 33 *Bylaws 1949 Revised Edition*. NGC (New Guinea Collection, University of Papua New Guinea), file ALX 3/97
- 34 *1940 Papua District Bylaws*.
- 35 Of the 156 missionaries who served between 1930 and 1960, 30 were Pacific Islanders. They served an average time of 16.75 years, compared with Australian ministers, 11.2 years; male lay workers 5.7; and female lay workers, eight years average tenure.
- 36 1951 Synod Minutes, NGC ALX 3/52.
- 37 Report to 1957 Synod by Marj Ladd, NGC ALX 3/58.
- 38 Report on General Secretary's visit, Executive Committee Minutes September 11, 1947, MOM 341.
- 39 Report to Executive Committee June 15, 1949, MOM 342.
- 40 S. R. Richardson, *Annual Report*, Synod 1951, NGC ALX 3/52.
- 41 Executive Committee Minutes July 10, 1946, MOM 340.
- 42 J. R. Andrew, *Annual Report*, 1946 Synod, MOM 354.

‘Where Tides Meet’

The Missionary Career of Constance (Paul) Fairhall in Papua

Diane Langmore

In 1945, Constance Fairhall published a small book, *Where Two Tides Meet*, describing the foundation and early days of Papua’s first tuberculosis and leprosy settlement on Gemo Island, off the coast from Port Moresby. The title referred to the physical phenomenon of the two tides sweeping round either side of the island to form an expanse of crystalline blue-green water between it and the mainland, but it also alluded symbolically, she wrote, to ‘the meeting of the tide of suffering and superstition’ with ‘the tide of healing and love’ at Gemo.¹

It is a metaphor that could well be applied to Sister Fairhall’s own life, except that the tides of her life were many more than two. Born in 1906, a missionary from 1932 to 1961, a government welfare officer until 1970, and dying in 1993, she encompassed in her life the meeting of the tides of early 20th-century evangelicalism and theological modernism, of Edwardian imperialism and late 20th-century post-colonialism, of healing that was ‘one part commonsense and two parts faith’ and modern medicine, and of traditional mission work and secular social work. Surviving

evidence does not permit a detailed mapping of these currents but a brief account of her career will give some indication of their ebb and flow in her life.

Constance Grace Fairhall was born on March 11, 1906 at Tunbridge Wells, Sussex, England. Her family and social background were typical of many others who had served the London Missionary Society for more than a century. Her father, Albert Thomas Fairhall, was a wholesale grocer and a deacon and church secretary at Mount Pleasant Congregationalist Church. He had married twice: his first wife bore a son before her death in 1897; his second marriage, to Grace Holder, gave him three daughters, Ray, Constance and Muriel.

Educated at Tunbridge Wells High School for Girls until she was 18, Constance joined the Mount Pleasant Congregational Church at the age of 15. She later became a Sunday School teacher and Girl Guide leader. When she was 18 her mother died so she spent two years caring for her father before beginning nursing training at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London. In London, she continued to attend church regularly, either the City Temple or the Rev. John Bevan's Church at Balham. Becoming a certificated nurse in April 1931, she did a year's midwifery training at the Elsie Inglis Memorial Hospital, Edinburgh.

While she was at St Bartholomew's, Constance applied to the LMS for service as a missionary. Her answers to the routine questions asked of candidates show that in her religious formation as in her social origins, she was very close to many who had preceded her. Invited to chronicle her personal Christian experience, she stressed, as had many candidates since the latter half of the 19th century, that she had undergone no 'sudden or dramatic' conversion experience: 'As a family we just grew up to love Christ, and to try to understand other people whose ideas did not coincide with ours.'² Her decision to offer for missionary service was made, under the influence of her parents, 'as far back as I can remember. That is, from the very beginning I thought I would be a nurse and a

missionary if possible.’ Her intention was nurtured by her Sunday School teacher.

As for most of her contemporaries, the desire to serve had replaced the desire to save as the declared missionary motive. ‘Only in work for others that is strenuous and unceasingly demands the best that is in me, shall I forget and rise above myself.’ Like other conscientious Christians before her, she recognised that, in the face of great need, many could not volunteer for foreign service, but, for her, ‘The way seems to have been made so very easy and I love the work so much.’ Medical work appealed particularly because ‘I cannot talk much but I think I can nurse’. She had always envisaged Jesus as a young doctor, she wrote, so by nursing she hoped to follow closely His example. It was a vision that she was to translate with great fidelity and effectiveness into her own missionary career.

Her theological understanding was undoctrinaire and non-sectarian. Asked what teaching she would wish to give non-Christians, she replied: ‘Just the teaching of Love and Immortality.’ Her view of the church was that it was ‘just ... a great body of people bound together by a common love of Christ’. She added, ‘I wish we could be one church without divisions of creeds and that it might all be much simpler and broader.’ Questioned as to the significance of the Lord’s Supper, she replied that to her it was an act of remembrance but that she recognised that for others it embodied the Real Presence. ‘I wish it might be made possible for everyone to partake of it in any church, whatever their belief.’

Such responses show the influences of the social gospel and of the ecumenical movement, probably encountered through her reading of publications of the Student Christian Movement. But they also reveal an independence of mind and spirit that was to enable her to continue to grow intellectually and spiritually throughout her long missionary career. When first inquiring to the LMS, she had stressed that she was seeking an interdenominational society that would leave one ‘entirely free as to religious beliefs’.

After a fortnight's special training in tropical medicine at Livingstone College, Leyton, Constance Fairhall sailed for Papua and reached Port Moresby in March 1933. The day she arrived, the mission hospital was handed over to her; six weeks later, the district missionary, Percy Chatterton, and his wife left on furlough and her range of responsibilities was extended. During that first year, outpatients increased from 30 to 60 or 70 per day; numbers at the baby-clinic also doubled and in a new maternity block, she offered the only available medical attention to local Papuan women with complicated deliveries. Writing to the LMS foreign secretary, she confessed: 'I love it all but recently it is all getting too big and a little beyond me, I want to "cut and run" somewhere where it is quiet, to think it out.'³ An enforced medical visit to Sydney gave her respite and the opportunity to prepare for what would become one of the most significant phases of her missionary career.

During her routine medical ministrations, Fairhall had been alarmed by the pervasiveness of tuberculosis in the villages around Port Moresby. While on medical patrol to the village of Tatana, two miles from Port Moresby, she had also seen 'two girls — advanced cases of leprosy — sitting on a veranda, nursing other people's healthy babies'.⁴ With the approval of her colleagues she had gone to see the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Hubert Murray, with a proposal that the Government provide funds for an isolation hospital for tuberculosis and leprosy sufferers, arguing that white settlers were responsible for the introduction of the former. The presence of tuberculosis in the local villages had been recognised since the 1920s but the chief medical officer, Walter Meresh Strong, complacent in his belief that a traditional Papuan diet and lifestyle boosted resistance, had ignored the problem. Colonial attempts to quarantine leprosy patients had been at best half-hearted.

Fairhall had refused to be intimidated by Strong. She had prepared a report in which she claimed to have identified 147 children in local villages with tubercular glands. When Strong

refused to acknowledge her findings, she found an ally in Murray; the Government agreed to finance the venture, if staff was provided by the LMS. Thus began her 'almost single-handed fight against tuberculosis and leprosy' in Papua.⁵ In a letter to the LMS she confided: 'I am very happy though rather scared about it. It could be a very big thing if only we were big enough to do it.'⁶

Searching for a site, Fairhall visited Gemo, a barren rocky island of 128 acres, three miles off shore from Port Moresby. The 29 mainland owners overwhelmed her by offering the island unconditionally for 50 years for her hospitals. After another six months' enforced medical leave in Sydney, during which she visited leper and tuberculosis hospitals, Fairhall returned to Port Moresby in June 1937 and immediately on arrival 'seized a canoe and dashed across to the island'.⁷ Wading ashore, she was devastated to see that the builders had placed the two hospitals neatly side by side. In desperation she went to explain the problem to the Lieutenant-Governor. 'Uncurling his long legs' and looking at her 'from beneath his drooping eyelids with those sleepy eyes which yet see so much', Murray asked: 'What do you want, another hospital?' and it was agreed that yet another block would be built further away for the lepers.⁸

On October 16, 1937, the hospitals were opened by Sir Hubert Murray who paid tribute to Fairhall's 'enterprise' and 'experience'.⁹ He remarked to her, 'I would not do this job for £5,000.' She replied, 'I think it is a question of taste sir for I have never been so happy in my life.'¹⁰ Reporting the conversation to a new friend, Rosalie McCutcheon, whom she had met in Australia, she reflected: 'It is true ... I think I have lived more fully, loved more, and learnt more in these last few weeks than in my whole life before. I did not think it possible to care quite so much for these people.'¹¹ Murray, writing his annual report that day, paid tribute to 'the skill, courage and self-sacrifice of Miss Constance Fairhall, who is to preside over the hospitals with no white companion'.¹²

Sister Fairhall took with her as staff a Samoan missionary couple and three married Papuan orderlies and their wives. Many observers were pessimistic about the project: the sick villagers would not come and if they did come they would not stay long enough for treatment to have any effect. Heeding their gloomy predictions, Fairhall cautiously estimated 10 patients for the first year, but within a fortnight 14 tuberculosis patients had arrived and, after eight months, 52 had been treated. In the first seven months eighteen lepers were admitted, mainly from the Gulf and Delta Divisions, most of them adolescent males. 'Some walked to the hospital with sticks, some crawled and one we carried,' she reported after the arrival of one group in the Government launch.¹³

Fairhall was realistic about the limitations of the scheme. Treatment for the tubercular patients was a twice-daily dosage with cod-liver oil and cough mixture and painting of the tubercular glands with iodine. The lepers were treated with cod-liver oil, bismuth and chaulmoogra oil injections and their sores were dressed daily. A liberal diet that included milk, eggs and fresh fruit and vegetables was provided and patients were each given a garden plot and a fishing line. This regimen might save some of the patients in the early stages of disease but she recognised that for many, death was inevitable.

Questioned as to why she took advanced cases whose deaths might reflect negatively on the experiment, Fairhall showed a breadth of understanding of her task. Even more important than the care of the ill was the need to remove the sources of infection from the villages. Moreover, she saw her work as not only palliative but educative. Each patient was allowed to bring one relative and these men and women would eventually go back to their villages having learned something of hygiene and health care. Visits to coastal villages by Gemo staff would reinforce the message.

Reluctant to advocate compulsory stays, at least for the tuberculosis cases, after she had read contemporary discussion of the subject, Fairhall realised that the only alternative was to make life at

Gemo so attractive that patients would come and stay voluntarily. She instituted a benign regime. Beside the traditional pursuits of gardening and fishing, the villagers were offered prayers, sport, school, Scouting, singsongs, dancing and games. 'Singing, shouting and dancing seem to be the order of the day,' she reported.¹⁴

Although Fairhall never made the systematic study of Papuan languages and cultures that some of her scholarly colleagues did, she had a natural sympathy with much that she learned through daily contact. She understood the Papuans' fear of strangers, of foreign places, of isolation and of the dark and found 'so understandable' their conviction that illness was caused by sorcery.¹⁵ While she recognised that it would in part defeat the purpose of the settlement, she reluctantly acquiesced to the villagers' desire to take their terminally ill home to die. She appreciated the 'inborn courtesy' of the Papuan people and gained quickly an insight that many overbearing colonials of that period never learned: how damaging was a display of anger.¹⁶ In a letter to Rosalie McCutcheon she reflected: 'To the Papuan anger is a greater sin than lying or stealing and who can say but that he is right?'¹⁷ Describing the appreciation of Papuan woman who watched her wash a child's feet, Fairhall observed to Rosalie, 'Everything depends on how it is done ... if I do it in a sergeant-major manner ... it may mean nothing at all. But if I do it with love, with jokes and gentleness, I think it can open a tiny window into heaven — but, oh lass, the numbers of windows I have left closed.'¹⁸

Running the settlement demanded much more of her than 'dressing leper sores and giving tb's cod-liver oil'. Fairhall detailed for Rosalie some of the myriad tasks of a medical missionary. 'Amongst other things, she helps to make native gardens, lies flat on her back scraping the underneath of canoes, ... beautifies graveyards, cleans out hen houses, drags along sack loads of stone to make roads, hauls up buckets of water to scrub hospital floors, goes

out at night fishing (and catches nothing), paints the inside of her house and tries to be a carpenter.¹⁹ For a woman who, although tall, was always thin and light-boned, it was a punishing routine.

Sources of discouragement were plentiful: the reluctance of some of the early patients to stay long enough to experience any benefit; their relatives' insistence on taking them home to die; marital disputes among the staff; conflicts between custom and the exigencies of hospital routine; and the ever-present experience of death. In one eight-day period in February 1938 there were five deaths. Finding herself with no able-bodied help to dig the fifth grave in the flinty ground, Fairhall persuaded the village people to let her conduct a burial at sea, an emergency measure that she later acknowledged to have been a mistake as local fishermen boycotted the area, fearful of catching tubercular fish. With the unsentimental realism that was characteristic of her, she then requested the Government to send prisoners to dig graves in advance for them.

It was a remarkable level of responsibility for a single woman just more than 30 years old. The LMS had allowed women missionaries in Papua only since the 1920s and it was greatly to the credit of the board of directors and the local committee that they encouraged her to go ahead. Women in all missions in Papua had displayed remarkable resourcefulness and devotion through nursing and, in New Guinea, the sisters of the Sacred Heart Mission had run a leprosarium at Anelaua since 1934. But they had the comfort of community whereas Fairhall, while unfailingly grateful for the sturdy support of her Samoan assistant and his wife, had sole responsibility for all decisions, practical, spiritual and (apart from a visit every three weeks from the Government doctor) medical.

Despite the burden of responsibility, she was not oppressed. Her work was grounded in a strong faith. On the eve of her departure for Gemo, she had written that she was 'bubbling over with joy' and her letters to Rosalie (extracts from which were later published as *Where Two Tides Meet*) reveal a gaiety and humour

that reflected the prevailing atmosphere of Gemo, which earned it the sobriquet, 'Island of Happiness'. A friend, Madelene Crump, who visited her there, observed that Fairhall was 'radiant'.²⁰

In times of discouragement and feeling a sense of inadequacy, her growing friendship with Rosalie became increasingly precious to her. When they had met in Australia, Rosalie had recently returned with her infant son from India where her husband, Oliver Keith Osborn McCutcheon, had died in missionary service. In her first sad days as a widow, she had responded to Constance's positive and bracing outlook. 'I miss Oko more every month I live,' Rosalie had written to her, 'and I'm growing grateful to you and your power to make me glad to be alive.'²¹ In a friendship that was to last more than half a century, Rosalie, a woman of great spiritual maturity who was to provide leadership and inspiration in the Student Christian Movement, became Constance's spiritual mentor and confidante. Disliking her sedate Christian name, she encouraged Rosalie and other friends to use the nickname 'Paul' (after the missionary apostle). As Paul Fairhall, she became a legendary figure in Papua.

In October 1939, Paul celebrated two years on the island. She felt exultant. 'The first year was a year of anxiety, the second brought a sense of peace, a feeling that the work is established.' Patients came at the rate of about 100 a year, and stayed; there were fewer staff quarrels and, although there had been 'lots of failures in the medical line,' there had also been 'some rather miraculous cures'. But her joy was tempered by the recent news of the outbreak of war. 'So the world is to be plunged into war,' she wrote to Rosalie. 'Sorrow and pain, hatred and death, and to what end? And the great constructive plans for mankind will crash in destruction.'²² At the end of February 1940, she learnt of the death of Sir Hubert Murray, 'and all the brightness has gone out of the day', Paul wrote. 'We owe him so much.'²³

It was an uncertain time for Gemo. Government funds were diverted into war preparation and, as the fear of invasion increased,

there was talk of evacuation. Paul resisted it, as she had resisted the request that she take overdue furlough in 1939. On January 25, 1942, she wrote to Norman Goodall, foreign secretary of the LMS: 'On the eve of things, I want you to know that we are full of beans ... No jitters.' Gemo was still crowded, although, she added, 'It will empty at the first bang I expect.' She realised that to most they would 'appear a little foolish staying put', but she believed that to do so would later 'count for much in Papua'.²⁴ But, despite her resolution, the Government withdrew support and the patients were sent home. As she recognised, this action negated much of what she had been trying to achieve.

Paul believed that she was subject to an order from the new military government for the evacuation of all white women and children. In the confusion of the time, she might not have known that nurses and religious women could claim exemption. After she had reached Brisbane (according to a friend, looking like a 'half-starved derelict'), she admitted to 'a sickening feeling of having let the LMS down — though at the time, up there, it seemed that the only thing ... one could do ... was to toe the line, obey orders and evacuate'. She added: 'Now I wonder.'²⁵ She might by then have known of the decision of Anglican and Catholic women missionaries to stay at their posts, where several of them were to lose their lives.

Although she had resisted leaving, Paul was glad of the opportunity to serve as an army nurse. She had sent in her papers while still at Gemo, explaining to Norman Goodall, 'I think you will understand why some of us rebel sometimes against the ease and comfort and peace of our jobs on beautiful little islands in the Pacific and long to be at home in a London hospital doing our bit.'²⁶ Goodall wrote back lamenting her loss to the LMS: 'We need more than ever people with your creative insight and capacity for sustained labour. Apart from the immediate service which you have been rendering as a medical missionary, your influence in the Papuan team ... is a gift which we value more than I can say.'²⁷

Surprised by the tribute, Paul replied, 'I did not know that I mattered much in Papua or the LMS ... I still feel pretty junior and still make so many silly mistakes', but she remained resolute in her intention to volunteer. 'I just want to live as fully as I can ... and I'm not sure that I am doing that altogether on Gemo. I think the great world struggle ... is the biggest thing now.' She assured Goodall that she thought she would be 'a better missionary for contact with those who aren't'.²⁸

In the event, Paul served for two years with the Royal Australian Army Nursing Service. Declining requests in 1944 from the Federation of Congregational Women to work with British servicewomen and from the Guide International Service to join a medical team in Yugoslavia, she took furlough in Britain, which was filled with deputation work for the LMS, and then returned to Australia to await permission to go back to Papua.

In June 1946, Paul returned to Gemo. It had been used as a general Papuan hospital by the military during the war and, as a result, had four new wards, a dispensary and an X-ray department (though no X-ray machine). She found that the 11 lepers who remained had been isolated in a small ward at the top of the hill, 'too far away for some ... with their crippled feet to reach the sea and bathe'.²⁹ As they had tried to run away, their possessions had been taken from them and they had been put in prison ramis (lap-laps) with the broad-arrow pattern. Her first task was to move them into a clean ward by the sea, provide them with bright new ramis and restore their belongings.

Paul's delight at being back at Gemo was clouded by the discovery that she had contracted tuberculosis. She was not unduly alarmed for herself — she believed that she would be able to 'smite the little wog' — but she was concerned for the future of the work.³⁰ She persuaded her colleagues to let her remain, under medical care, on the island for three months to hand over to a colleague, Sister Rachel Leighton. Her medical progress must have

been satisfactory as, apart from one stint on the mainland as a locum district missionary, she remained at Gemo until November 1949. In December 1947, she was overjoyed to receive a visit from Rosalie McCutcheon. Rosalie's diary of her fortnight at Gemo is a useful insight into Paul's devotion, which was never revealed in her own matter-of-fact, self-deprecating letters: 'New Year's Day: Paul decided on an early night. 1. Child bitten by centipede. 2. Canoe not back till 11.30. 3. Crying babies. 4. Lovely boy died at 4 am. Doubt if she had any sleep all night.'³¹

This postwar period was dramatically different from the pioneering days. Although only 25 patients remained on the island at the end of the war, numbers built up to 200 a year and Paul had to be firm about turning away those suffering from other diseases. From 1948, the new drugs for tuberculosis and leprosy, streptomycin and sulphetrone, effected dramatic results and the patients, seeing evidence of progress, were willing to stay.

When Paul left Gemo at the end of 1949, she left with the assurance that the work was thoroughly established. Norman Goodall described it in his history of the LMS as 'one of the finest achievements in the annals of missionary devotion and one of the most encouraging instances of collaboration between Mission and Government in the interests of the Natives'.³² On furlough, Paul published a second volume of extracts from her letters under the title, *Island of Happiness*. It was dedicated to 'Ruth' (a pseudonym for Rosalie) 'who has shown me so much of the way'.

For the next decade Paul worked at a number of LMS stations along the southern Papuan coast: Port Moresby (1949), Koaru (1952–53), Kapuna (1953–55) and Delena (1958–60). She also taught for a time at the training institution for Papuan pastors, Lawes College, and acted twice as district missionary. Experience on these different stations and in the diverse tasks of the general missionary prompted her to reflect on the place of missionaries and other expatriates in Papua. At a time when officials saw no

possibility of self-determination for Papuans until at least the end of the 20th century, she believed that, despite the lack of trained leadership and other insuperable difficulties, foreigners should 'progressively hand over responsibility to them and stand by them as they make their own mistakes and learn their own lessons'. In a period when few expatriates questioned their right to a higher standard of living and their assumption of superiority, she was uneasy about the 'infinitely greater wealth of the European, the Western intolerance towards people of another colour, the poor whites who lower standards and dishonour their own countries' and the hypocrisy of enforcing on Papuans standards that they did not maintain themselves. She recognised that 'we as Europeans, are all deeply involved in this and sharers in its guilt'.

Her reflections prompted her to reassess missionary methods. She endorsed the conviction of a young colleague that 'the old days of having a retinue of carriers, of sitting in chairs while our people sit on the floor, of dining in solitary splendour, have gone for ever'. With a wisdom born of 20 years' experience, however, she observed that such behaviour was often in response to the firm expectations of the Papuan people. She remarked: 'The thing that matters above everything else is how much we really love and understand them, and how much we are available.'³³

In 1961, at the age of 55, Paul Fairhall began the last phase of her work in Papua. She wrote: 'I have felt for some time now a very great desire ... to try my hand at Welfare work in this land ... A strong urge to go and live amongst these people in a house similar to theirs, to share as far as possible in their daily lives, and to be of use.'³⁴ As the LMS did not employ social workers she asked to retire from its staff but to remain an associate for a trial year, supported by its local church, the Papua Ekalesia.

Paul made her base at Koke Market, the 'focal point of trading and social life' for the coastal Papuans.³⁵ She rented a room in a local house and set up an office in a community hut on the

fringe of the market. Each day she walked there at six o'clock, held morning prayers and then sat at her folding table, looking out over the mounds of bananas, the bundles of sugar cane and the strings of fish displayed under coconut palms, waiting for clients. 'Not many people, as yet, come to see me but they know that I am there and will try to help in time of need,' she wrote after some months. In the afternoons she went as an 'unofficial almoner' to the 'native hospital' and on alternate Saturdays she was permitted to visit the jail at Bomana.³⁶

As her trial year came to a close, Paul felt dissatisfied with what she had achieved. 'I had limited funds, no real status or authority, nothing behind me ... except the interest of the church and no ... follow-up scheme.' Besides, she felt that she was in the wrong place: 'The people I most wanted to serve were not the ever-shifting population of the market and the hospital but the people who were most affected by the changing world in which they were living.'³⁷ These she identified as the residents of Hohola, a new suburb designed specifically for Papua New Guineans from all over the country, and as such, very different from the settled peri-urban villages attached to Port Moresby. Its residents had left the security of their own villages to work in the town and live alongside people for whom they might feel traditional enmity or at best antipathy. Besides these internecine tensions, they were adjusting to all the pressures of modern urban living and a predominantly Western way of life.

The houses at Hohola — small, grey, concrete-block rectangles, known by their occupants as 'dog-boxes' — were available to Papua New Guineans at a low rent. Paul wrote to the Administration asking if she might be permitted to rent one and was told that they were available only for public servants; would she 'consider becoming an Admin. servant and work for them in Hohola as a welfare officer?'³⁸ She accepted.

With the passage of 40 years, it is easy to forget what an unconventional step she had taken. In 1963, Port Moresby was an

ethnically segregated town. There were separate suburbs, schools and hospitals and only that year were discriminatory regulations forbidding Papuans to shop at the leading stores or to swim at the local beach removed. Most expatriate residents, including other Administration social workers, lived in comfortable leafy suburbs where the only Papuan residents were those who occupied domestic servants' quarters (known as *boi-houses*) in the back gardens. Opportunities for social mixing between Europeans and Papua New Guineans were few.

Because only a minority of Hohola residents were Motu-speaking coastal Papuans, Paul had as few established links with them as they had with each other. 'It is not easy for east and west, mixed race and pure native, R.C. and Protestant, speaking a wide variety of languages, to live happily together. They tend to get together in small, segregated language groups, sometimes ... unable to speak to their neighbours. Some keep their homes constantly locked for fear of strangers.'³⁹ She was quick to see that the women, deprived of their village activities of gardening, fishing and gossiping, found it a rather aimless existence in which gambling and card-playing often filled the vacuum. Yet, despite the obvious problems, she was delighted to be there: 'I feel as if I may have found suddenly that work for which I was seeking.'⁴⁰

Paul's work was based at the welfare centre, where she had two Papuan assistants: 'I am learning much from them,' she wrote.⁴¹ During the day she visited as often as possible the 280 homes in the settlement and, at night, she opened her home to children or 'any other lonely folk who would like to come in, read or look at picture books, or just talk'.⁴² One of her rooms was a sanctuary for people in special need, such as battered wives. A weekly gathering of small girls concluded not with prayers but with all — including the middle-aged welfare officer — doing the limbo.

Visits to homes revealed a range of problems: illness, violence, loneliness, poverty and practical difficulties with the low-

lying, poorly sited houses. Pay days were particularly critical as husbands often drank a large portion of their wages.⁴³ ‘This leads to anger on the part of the wife who may already be in debt to the stores, or who has fallen behind with rent due to sickness, improvidence, many children, drinking or sheer bad luck. Many folk have a real burden of anxiety on their shoulders and feel bogged down in a sort of vicious circle’, from which gambling often appeared the easy way out.⁴⁴ Frequently called out at night to drunken quarrels, Paul found that the best response was to separate the assailants, leaving one to his friends while taking the other to tell his grievances over a pot of tea.

After two years at Hohola, Paul wrote: ‘I find I still greatly lack wisdom but I think I have been accepted by these people and it is lovely to get shouts and waves as one goes round.’⁴⁵ She was sensitive to the rapidly changing self-image of the indigenous people and to a corresponding shift in their perceptions of Europeans: ‘The people of this country are going through a difficult and demanding time. They are becoming aware of themselves and their own potential as never before, and are intolerant of any suggestion of superiority or patronage ... This I feel is inevitable as part of this “growing” period. One finds that one unwittingly offends sometimes.’ Such perceptions, which would become widespread among the expatriate population a decade later, were novel in 1964. Paul concluded her reflection on race relations: ‘It takes much grace on both sides, probably most on theirs.’⁴⁶

Over the next seven years, Paul increased the range of services and amenities available to the residents of Hohola. Noting how avidly the children read in her house in the evenings, she organised donations of books and magazines for a community library, which opened with 1,600 titles in 1966. That year she moved into a larger house with a clubroom along one side and encouraged, without directing, the proliferation of community clubs, which met there: ‘I do nothing except furnish materials,

provide suppers and be there, otherwise they manage themselves.⁴⁷ In 1968, growing concerned at the number of unemployed youth in Hohola, she established a self-help carpentry scheme. With donated secondhand tools and advice from a Papuan Anglican Franciscan brother, 20 to 30 boys were taught the rudiments of furniture making. Two years later, more than half of them had found jobs. In all her work, Paul appreciated the freedom of being a secular worker, which enabled her to reach people of all religions — or none. ‘In this work I do not attempt to proselytise,’ she wrote, ‘but they know under whose banner I try to serve.’⁴⁸

In 1970, Paul was awarded the MBE. That year she left Papua New Guinea. She was approaching the mandatory retirement age, but, more importantly, she recognised that it was time for expatriates to get out of positions of authority and to hand over to Papua New Guineans. ‘I feel sure that those of us who have grown old in Papua New Guinea must move on, else how can the people of this land move in as they so long to do? We often excuse our reluctance to go by saying “They are not ready yet” but many of us have been truly amazed by the progress already made and the speed of it.’⁴⁹ Retirement for Paul consisted of returning to England and joining the staff of St Andrew’s Hall, Selly Oak, Birmingham, where she helped prepare prospective missionaries for the field. Then, from 1972 to 1980 she served as assistant warden at Lomas House, Worthing, a home for retired missionaries.

Throughout her life, Paul had remained open to new ideas and experiences. The rather conventional and proper woman who had arrived in Papua in 1932 revelled some 40 years later in a London production of the musical *Hair*. The British nurse who had come with the full authority of her profession and under the panoply of a confident British imperialism learned the need to serve rather than to command, to listen rather than to instruct and finally to withdraw in order to encourage the move to independence. The evangelical Christian with a rudimentary

theology matured into a lively and critical reader of modern theologians and an enthusiastic follower of the 'Honest to God' ferment of the Seventies. At the age of 84, she wrote to Rosalie McCutcheon, who had done so much to stimulate her intellectual interests: 'At the moment I am working with three books, one on "Praying with Icons" ... I want to understand more about icons.'⁵⁰ She continued to follow national and international events closely, fulminating against the excesses of Thatcherism and grieving for the hungry, persecuted and homeless of the world. To Rosalie, she wrote in 1991: 'The world and all its manifold happenings continues to amaze, terrify, delight, reduce to despair, and human nature constantly astonishes one.'⁵¹

In her long career Paul Fairhall epitomised much of the service of missionary women during the first half of the 20th century. As has been noted, women of all missionary organisations performed heroic feats of medical service. Others achieved greater formal learning and deeper theological sophistication than she did. And each mission society could boast of women workers who retained a vibrant and dynamic faith. Where Paul Fairhall was more exceptional was in the unceasing spiritual and intellectual development that prompted her constantly to seek new forms of service and new modes of expression for her faith. Remarkable, too, was the resourcefulness that inspired her to initiate new ventures and the self-reliance that enabled her to execute them, virtually single-handed. She was fortunate in belonging to an organisation that allowed her scope for such initiative. Paul Fairhall died at Worthing on March 30, 1993. Even beyond death, she seemed to retain her commitment to new information and new discoveries; she bequeathed her body to the School of Anatomy at the University of London.

Footnotes

- 1 Constance Fairhall, *Where Two Tides Meet* (London, 1945), p. 12.
- 2 LMS Candidates Papers, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. These are the source of much of the preceding biographical information and subsequent quotations, unless otherwise acknowledged.
- 3 Letter, Fairhall to Secretary, LMS, March 28, 1934, Papua Letters, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.
- 4 Fairhall, *Where Two Tides Meet*, p. 5.
- 5 E. Kettle, *That They Might Live* (Sydney, 1979), 58.
- 6 Letter, Fairhall to Secretary, LMS, February 23, 1930, Papua Letters, LMS.
- 7 Fairhall, *Where Two Tides Meet*, 9.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 *Pacific Islands Monthly* (November 1937), p. 65.
- 10 Fairhall, *Where Two Tides Meet*, p. 17.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 *Papua Annual Report* (1936–37).
- 13 Fairhall, *Where Two Tides Meet*, p. 25.
- 14 *Papua Annual Report* (1937–38), p. 42.
- 15 Letter, November 5, 1946; Constance Fairhall, *Island of Happiness* (London, 1951).
- 16 Letter, November 10, 1946, Fairhall, *Island of Happiness*.
- 17 Letter, August 31, 1949, Fairhall, *Island of Happiness*.
- 18 Fairhall, *Where Two Tides Meet*, p. 67.
- 19 Ibid., p. 40.
- 20 Ibid., p. 8.
- 21 Letter, McCutcheon to Fairhall, n.d. McCutcheon Papers, National Library of Australia, Canberra.
- 22 Fairhall, *Where Two Tides Meet*, 62.
- 23 Ibid., 66.
- 24 Letter, Fairhall to N. Goodall, January 25, 1942, Papua Letters, LMS.
- 25 Letter, Fairhall to N. Goodall, June 6, 1942, Papua Letters, LMS.
- 26 Letter, Fairhall to N. Goodall, March 25, 1941, Papua Letters, LMS.
- 27 Letter, N. Goodall to Fairhall, June 27, 1941, Papua Letters, LMS.
- 28 Letter, N. Goodall to Fairhall, August 11, 1941, Papua Letters, LMS.
- 29 Letter, July 1, 1946, Fairhall, *Island of Happiness*.
- 30 Letter, Fairhall to Hurst, July 21, 1946, Papua Letters, LMS.
- 31 McCutcheon Diary, January 1, 1948, McCutcheon Papers, National Library of Australia, Canberra.
- 32 N. Goodall, *The History of the London Missionary Society* (London, 1954), p. 438.
- 33 Constance Fairhall, *Some Shape of Beauty* (London, 1964), pp. 46–8.

- 34 Constance Fairhall, *It's a Great Life* (roneoed), p .1.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid., p. 4.
- 37 Ibid., p. 5
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid., p. 6.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid., p. 7.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 In 1962, Papua New Guineans were legally permitted to drink alcohol for the first time and in 1963, when Paul arrived in Hohola, all discriminatory prohibition was lifted.
- 44 Ibid., p. 8.
- 45 Ibid., p. 11.
- 46 Ibid., p. 1.
- 47 Ibid., p. 18.
- 48 Ibid., p. 13.
- 49 Ibid., p. 24.
- 50 Letter, Fairhall to McCutcheon, August 14, 1990, McCutcheon Papers.
- 51 Letter, Fairhall to McCutcheon, November 10, 1991, McCutcheon Papers.

The God of the Melanesian Mission

David Hilliard

How did Christian missionaries in the South Pacific see the relationship of the God they worshipped with the gods of the people they were trying to convert? This chapter will examine the approach of the Melanesian Mission, which from the mid-nineteenth century was the agency of Anglican missionary activity in the south-west Pacific. Founded in 1849 by Bishop George Augustus Selwyn of New Zealand, the mission's original objective was to convert to the religion of the Church of England the peoples of a huge region stretching from New Caledonia to New Guinea. This was an impossible dream, and the mission's sphere of work quickly shrank to a more manageable area: the northern New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) and the eastern and central Solomon Islands.¹ In 1975, the Melanesian Mission became the Church of Melanesia, an autonomous province of the Anglican Communion.

The written records of the Melanesian Mission reveal much less than might be expected about its missionaries' views of the God they worshipped and the religious ideas they conveyed to the Melanesians. In their letters, reports and diaries, they recounted their daily work in the islands, the services and school classes they conducted, and their journeys around their districts on foot and by canoe, but there was a tradition in the Melanesian Mission of

reticence about revealing personal religious feelings and beliefs. Nor do the writings of the missionaries reveal much about their understanding of the religion of the Melanesians whom they were seeking to convert. The Melanesian Mission never developed a systematic missionary philosophy. From the fragmentary evidence, however, it is possible to identify a continuous tradition of thought within the mission, which emphasised the universality of Christianity and the need to take account of human cultural diversity as something good in itself.² This chapter will explore the origins and expressions of this tradition as shown in the work of four of its missionaries: Bishop J. C. Patteson, R. H. Codrington, W. G. Ivens and C. E. Fox.

The creation of a distinctive intellectual tradition in the Melanesian Mission was assisted by its relative isolation in the south-west Pacific and by its semi-independent status. It was not controlled by a major missionary society, such as the Church Missionary Society, but was a self-governing missionary diocese within the Anglican Church in New Zealand. Its European staff was quite small — they numbered about 35 in 1911 — and had a strong corporate spirit. They were predominantly English by birth and education and, until the 1890s, all were males. Of the English missionary clergy, about half were university graduates, which was a much higher proportion than in most other Anglican missions. Until the 1890s, all missionaries spent part of each year on Norfolk Island, where they taught in the mission's central school, and, until the 1920s, they normally travelled to their island stations each year in the mission vessel *Southern Cross*. On Norfolk Island, they absorbed the mission's *lingai* — traditions and ways of doing things — and were inducted by the older members of the mission's staff into their missionary philosophy and time-honoured methods of work. No mission in the South Pacific was more conscious of the superiority of its traditions. A handbook for new missionaries, published in 1907, urged the importance of Norfolk Island as the

'University' of the mission, for 'only there is the spirit of the Mission to be caught'. 'We owe too much to our Mission ancestors to lightly put on one side the lessons they have taught us. Our safety lies in developing along the lines laid down by them.'³ About the same time, Archdeacon Uthwatt in the Solomon Islands proudly quoted the view of a missionary visitor: 'There is no doubt that Melanesia is the most scientifically worked Mission in the South Seas.'⁴

The principal source of the theories and practice of the Melanesian Mission was John Coleridge Patteson.⁵ A Fellow of Merton College, Oxford University, Patteson made his first missionary voyage to Melanesia in 1855 as missionary chaplain to Bishop G. A. Selwyn. Patteson soon took over from Selwyn the responsibility for the ordinary operations of the mission and, in 1861, was consecrated first Bishop of Melanesia. After his violent death at Nukapu in the Reef Islands, near Santa Cruz, in September 1871, his cousin Charlotte Yonge wrote a two-volume biography in which she reproduced long extracts from letters to his family and friends in which he had mused on the problems of relating Christianity to Melanesian culture.⁶ For many years this biography was read by virtually every new missionary and, at the mission's headquarters on Norfolk Island, the study in his house was left exactly as it was when he set out on his final voyage. Almost 40 years after Bishop Patteson's death, it was possible for a newly arrived missionary to write letters sitting at Patteson's desk surrounded by his books and diaries.⁷ Among the next generation of missionaries, the views of the 'martyr bishop' on almost everything were given an almost sacred status, not to be challenged.

The intellectual outlook of the Melanesian Mission in the 19th century was very different from that of Victorian Evangelicals. Patteson and other 19th-century missionaries arrived in the south-west Pacific with intellectual assumptions that had been shaped by the theology they had studied in preparation for ordination. Two

theologians were of particular importance. Richard Hooker, of the 16th century, and Joseph Butler, of the 18th century, had both taught that a knowledge of natural law, representing the divinely ordained moral law, was common to all peoples; therefore, all humans had an innate moral sense.

That being the case, the concept of ‘savage’ had little meaning. Neither the moral failings nor the moral successes of islanders differed in any essential way from those of Europeans.⁸

Patteson was also influenced by the Broad Church liberals of the mid-Victorian period. He was cautiously sympathetic to their contention that the intellectual climate had changed since the previous generation and that ‘thinking men’ were approaching religious questions from a new point of view, so that old ways of stating Christian doctrines were ‘worn out’ and new expressions were needed. It was the same in Melanesia as in England and Europe:

Is it true ... that there must be some adaptation of the mode of teaching Christianity to commend it rightly to the men of the 19th century in England and Europe, just as there must be something different in the mode of teaching a civilized Englishman and an uncivilized Melanesian?⁹

Patteson read and pondered *Essays and Reviews*, the controversial collection of essays by seven clergymen, published in 1859, which caused an enormous debate during the next decade over the acceptable doctrinal limits of the Church of England.¹⁰ He privately deplored what he saw as the ‘spirit of intellectualism’ among the authors for dealing with the great truths of religion without the necessary conditions of humility and faith, but he was haunted by the questions they asked about traditional views of biblical inspiration and atonement. He warned his sister Frances against the writings of F. D. Maurice, whom he thought to be ‘simply and

plainly “unsound” on the doctrine of the Atonement’, because his views were inconsistent with ‘the Scriptural idea of a *Just God*’: ‘And so I call Maurice’s to a certain extent *human teaching*, more philosophy than religion, more metaphysics than revelation.’¹¹ However, he did not close his mind to the new ideas. In letters to his sisters, he regularly asked them to send out the latest works of theology, for his own reading and to stimulate the minds of the young missionaries he was training.

Increasingly, Patteson was preoccupied with the question of accommodation: that is, the need to adapt or accommodate Christian doctrines and practices, which had been shaped by a particular culture, to a very different social environment. After a few years of work in Melanesia, he began to form a missionary philosophy around two distinct principles. The first was that the sincere profession of Christianity by Melanesian islanders should have a social expression. This ‘practical application of Christian doctrine’ meant a new way of social and domestic life, extending to ‘all actions of personal cleanliness’, habits of industry and regularity, just notions of exchange, barter, trade, management of criminals and division of labour.¹² The second principle was that Christianity, ‘the religion for humanity at large’, should be adapted to the circumstances of its adherents.¹³ He felt that too many missionaries — and he was privately critical of the Presbyterians he encountered in Vanuatu — were too inclined to reproduce among their converts their own culturally conditioned understanding of Christianity. He believed that it should be possible for missionaries to distinguish between the ‘fundamentals’ of Christian doctrine and practice — ‘all men must receive that’ — and secondary matters, reflecting a particular cultural context, which should be adapted to the circumstances of their hearers:

I have for years thought that we seek in our Missions a great deal too much to make *English* Christians of our converts. We consciously and unanimously assume English

Christianity (as something distinct I mean from the doctrines of the Church of England), to be necessary ... We seek to denationalise these races, as far as I can see; whereas we ought surely to change as little as possible — only what is clearly incompatible with the simplest form of Christian teaching and practice. I don't mean that we are to compromise truth, but to study the native character, and not present the truth in an unnecessarily unattractive form.¹⁴

It was the duty of a missionary to identify the points of contact — 'the element of faith' — in Melanesian religion and to build on these. He planted this idea in the thinking of the Melanesian Mission.

The intellectual outlook of the Melanesian Mission was also influenced from the 1880s by the attempt by a younger generation of scholars in the Tractarian tradition to reinterpret and restate 'the Catholic faith' in relation to contemporary thought and current problems. This was the movement known as liberal Catholicism, which had its origins in a collection of essays edited by Charles Gore and first published in 1889, *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*.¹⁵ The outlook of the contributors to *Lux Mundi* was optimistic and hopeful, more reverent to received doctrines than the authors of *Essays and Reviews*. They believed that contemporary currents of secular thought were not enemies to be fought, as many Christian thinkers of the time supposed, but potential allies of Christianity, for the God of Truth was at work in the whole created order. Writing on 'The Christian Doctrine of God', Aubrey Moore argued that the revelation of God in Christ was 'true and complete', while at the same time, 'every new truth which flows in from the side of science, or metaphysics, or the experience of social and political life, is designed in God's providence to make that revelation real, by bringing out its hidden truths'.¹⁶ In his essay on 'The Incarnation in Relation to Development' — one of the most controversial in the book — J. R. Illingworth wrote of Christianity

in relation to evolution and to other religions. For Illingworth, God had revealed Himself partially in every human religion, and His final revelation, through Jesus Christ, was consistent with the doctrine of development or evolution in the natural world:

religion, however humble the mode of its first appearing, is yet universal to man ... The pre-Christian religions were the age-long prayer. The Incarnation was the answer ... [Christianity] contains in spiritual summary the religious thoughts and practices and ways of prayer and worship, not of one people only, but of all the races of men.¹⁷

The *Lux Mundi* scholars saw themselves as synthesising the piety and churchmanship of the Tractarians with the modern spirit of intellectual inquiry and the conclusions of 'moderate' biblical criticism. Many conservative High Churchmen were profoundly shocked. However, the ideas expressed in *Lux Mundi* and other works from the same school, such as Charles Gore's 1891 Bampton Lectures on *The Incarnation of the Son of God*, did much to shape the outlook of the next generation of Anglican clergy in England and the colonies. They were transmitted to theological students through popular textbooks such as Robert Ottley's *The Doctrine of the Incarnation* (1896), in which the author quoted approvingly from Illingworth's essay in *Lux Mundi* and reiterated his conclusion that Christianity was the final and universal religion, incorporating all elements of truth, which other religions had partially anticipated. God was revealed to some degree in all religious systems, he claimed, and each race had a unique contribution to make to the universal church.¹⁸

In the early decades of the 20th century, these ideas on non-Christian religions became part of the mainstream of Anglican thinking. They were strongly represented at the first World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, at which a majority of correspondents in the section on animistic religions held that there was 'a modicum of truth in all religious systems',

and that the missionary should look for and build on these points of contact, 'gently leading on to the full truth'.¹⁹ Patteson had said much the same thing 50 years earlier. Until the 1930s, liberal Catholicism was the dominant influence in Anglican theology. In the Melanesian Mission, it provided an intellectual and theological framework for almost all of the European missionaries until the inauguration of the self-governing Church of Melanesia in 1975.

We can learn something about the idea of God that was taught by missionaries of the Melanesian Mission from the handful of personal accounts that were written by early Melanesian converts to Christianity. At the centre of the teaching of the Anglican missionaries was the idea of God the Creator, 'the Eternal and Universal Father'.²⁰ This God was an all-powerful spirit. He was present everywhere and made everything in the world, and He was greater than the creator gods and culture heroes who were common in traditional Melanesian religions.²¹ To avoid confusing the concepts, and because of 'the enormous difficulty ... of finding an adequate native expression in any one language', Bishop Patteson did not use a vernacular name for the God of the Bible, but kept to the English word 'God'.²² George Sarawia was first taken by Patteson from his home on Mota in the Banks Islands to a 'winter school' on the island of Lifu in the Loyalty Islands in 1858. There, he recalled, he was taught to read, but 'I did not yet understand about a good and bad way of living, and that sin brought death':

One day the Bishop asked me for the names of the spirits, which one had made the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, the world and people and other things. I told him *Qat* [the name of a spirit-power]. But he then told me it was God alone who had made all things, but I did not believe him. I said to myself that this was just another spirit whom the white people think about, whereas we think about *Qat*. Truly that is what I thought, but it only went to show that I was still in darkness and did not yet perceive the road that the bishop was pointing out to me.²³

Clement Marau, who went from Merelava in the Banks Islands to the Norfolk Island school in 1868, recalled his own instruction from Bishop Patteson using the mission's question and answer catechism:

Thus it asked, Who made you? and Who made all things? And it answered that it was He alone who created the heaven and the earth and all things therein, and men besides, and that He is neither man nor ghost, and not Qat as you ignorant people used to think; but He is the true Spirit, and His name is God. He is everlasting, He is omnipresent, He governs all things, and not a single thing can be hid from Him; be it night or day it is all the same to Him, and nothing at all is hard for Him to do. With Him is the source of light; He is Master of life and death.²⁴

A generation later Clement Marau, writing to his son Martin who was also a pupil at the Norfolk Island school, urged him to be 'a good boy' and to seek 'God the Father of us two':

I have given you up to the Great Father, that is God, who is not a man like you, but a Spirit. He made you, and he takes care of you far better than I or anyone else can do.²⁵

God the creator was also God the judge. In 1886 Bishop John Selwyn visited Soga, chief of Bugotu, a district of Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands, who was in danger of dying from influenza: 'Finally, I spoke of eternal life, and God's judgment; that we all wanted life, and that God would give it us if we sought Him; but that He would inevitably judge us if we disobeyed His commands.'²⁶

But what did God's judgment involve? Did it mean that those who did not accept the Christian Gospel would be condemned to everlasting punishment? In England during the second half of the 19th century, a growing number of theologians and ordinary churchgoers began to challenge the traditional doctrine of eternal

punishment, believing that it was inconsistent with the absolute goodness of God and an affront to modern ideas of morality.²⁷ However, there are few signs of this more liberal theology in the Melanesian Mission before the 1870s. First came the belief that unbaptised pagans would be judged by God by whether they had lived according to the highest standards known to them. This teaching on the fate of unbaptised pagans can be glimpsed in the novel *Percy Pomo*, by Charles Brooke, who was a missionary on Nggela in the Solomon Islands in the early 1870s. The missionary, Mr Wakefield, speaks to Pomo's mother, Siana, whose husband, Marévo, had died:

Marévo was a good man ... he did not know God, but God knew him. He is in a better place than Happy Island [Nggela]. He followed the religion that he had. He could not walk by a light that had not then shone upon him. Your husband, our dear son's father, is at rest in God's keeping. There is no reason to cry for him.²⁸

A few years later, Patteson's successor as head of the Melanesian Mission, Bishop John Selwyn, a very conventional thinker, expressed publicly his hope that all would ultimately achieve salvation: 'I hope and believe that God presents himself in another life to those who have rejected Him here, and does all He can, short of compulsion, to win them.'²⁹ When he wrote those words he was thinking of the unbelieving poets, Byron and Shelley, rather than about the fate of Melanesian pagans, but the issue was the same. Although there is no direct evidence of what individual missionaries believed or taught, the absence of further references in mission literature or private letters to the existence of hell or whether pagans would go to eternal punishment appears to indicate that these subjects were not considered particularly important. In this there was a sharp contrast with the South Sea Evangelical Mission in the Solomon Islands, whose missionaries spoke and wrote frequently on the need to choose between the path to heaven and the path to hell.³⁰

Three missionaries of the Melanesian Mission wrote important books on the customs, social organisation and religion of societies in island Melanesia. Their writings reveal something of the religious and intellectual outlook that lay behind their investigations. The greatest of these Anglican ethnologists of the South Pacific was Robert Henry Codrington, whose books on *The Melanesian Languages* (1885) and *The Melanesians* (1891) became standard works of reference.³¹ A Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford University, and curate of Rev. Edmund Hobhouse at a church there, he went to New Zealand in 1860 when Hobhouse was appointed first Bishop of Nelson and worked for three years as a missionary clergyman in the Nelson colony. In 1863, he sailed with Bishop Patteson to Melanesia on the mission ship *Southern Cross*. This three-month voyage reached the furthest limit of the mission's sphere of operation, Santa Isabel, in the central Solomon Islands.

Codrington's addresses and writings on the relationship between Christian doctrines and Melanesian religious beliefs span a period of almost 40 years. The first was after his return to Nelson, in 1863, when he gave a public lecture, subsequently published as a pamphlet, on the work of the Melanesian Mission and the people of Melanesia. Much of his information came from the Banks Islands, where the mission had obtained a foothold on the island of Mota. As with his later ethnological work, Codrington was cautious about drawing conclusions from particular and inadequately understood examples. During his lecture, he raised the European-style question, 'Do they worship idols?', and related what he had discovered about the gods of the Melanesians and their beliefs about life after death:

I can tell you that I saw images in one of the Banks Islands in a kind of shrine; and many images in the Solomon Islands; but I do not know in what degree of reverence they are held ... Of course they believe in certain gods, of whom

they tell strange stories. The Mota people seem to have for their chief god one Ikpat, who, they say, made earth and men, night and day; who had many brothers who continually tricked him and maltreated him; and among them, as in most mythologies, one is the representative of evil.³²

In 1867, Codrington joined the staff of the Melanesian Mission and, for the next 20 years, was headmaster of its central school on Norfolk Island, St Barnabas'. This gave him a unique position to collect information on Melanesian languages and customs from the young men from many different islands who were his pupils. He was rigorous in his use of evidence and he recognised the strengths and potential biases of his informants:

Converts are disposed to blacken generally and indiscriminately their own former state, and with greater zeal the present practices of others. There are some things they are really ashamed to speak of; and there are others which they think they ought to consider wrong, because they are associated in their memory with what they know to be really bad ... Few missionaries have time to make systematic enquiries; if they do, they are likely to make them too soon, and for the whole of their after-career make whatever they observe fit into their early scheme of the native religion.³³

In 1880, while on a visit to England, he reported his findings to the Anthropological Institute in London in a paper on 'Religious Beliefs and Practices in Melanesia'. At the conclusion of his survey, he discussed the implications of the beliefs and customs he had described for the Christian missionary who sought to teach about the 'True God and Eternal Life'. He was prepared to widen the definition of religion to include any belief in beings who are invoked by prayer, and who can be approached by some ritual of communication. Missionaries, he said, should take these beliefs

seriously, for they embodied perceptions of the supernatural and things unseen by fellow human beings and were therefore footholds for an 'advance into the way of salvation':

It is probably ... not wise for any teacher of true religion to neglect or despise, even when he must abhor them, the superstitious beliefs and rites of those whom he would lead from darkness to light. It is far better, if it be possible, to search for and recognise what is true and good among wild and foul superstitions; to find the common foundation, if such there be, which lies in human nature itself, ready for the superstructure of the Gospel.³⁴

Another exposition of Codrington's views was unpublished and therefore almost unknown. These were the Wittering Lectures that he gave at Chichester Cathedral in 1902 on 'The Gospel as Presented to Savage Peoples'.³⁵ In these three lectures, he was concerned to demonstrate to an audience drawn from the intellectual and leisured classes of a cathedral city — people who might have stepped straight from one of the Barchester novels of Anthony Trollope — that the religions of the heathen were 'not to be despised' but should be regarded with respect and love; that Christianity was a religion that was new but not alien to their mental conceptions and deepest desires, and that those 'heathen' could pass 'naturally' out of the old into the new. These cautious conclusions were the final statement of ideas that had been maturing ever since his first contact with the peoples of island Melanesia almost 40 years earlier.

The lectures deserve closer examination in view of Codrington's use of Melanesian examples — 'people I know' — to support his general assertions, and also for his evaluation in the light of Christianity of customs and religious rituals that he had described in *The Melanesians* without comment or judgment.

Some people, Codrington declared, denied that a primitive people had the capacity to receive the truths of Christianity. In fact,

there was nothing in their natural qualities and traditional beliefs that made them incapable of receiving the Gospel. On the contrary, there were many elements universally present in primitive religion that prepared the way for the reception of Christianity. Firstly, there was the sense of a limitation of human power and a dependence on powers 'above their own'. This was not the same as belief in a supreme creator in the Christian sense, but it did involve belief in a pervading mysterious power (*mana*) and prayer and sacrifices to spirits of ancestors and other spirit-powers. This prayer (or magical spell), involving a form of words that were powerful to compel without regard to the moral attitude of the speaker, was not 'real prayer' in the Christian sense, but Christianity found in this sense of limitation and dependence 'a very suitable soil to take root and grow in'. Secondly, there was the universal moral sense of humanity: 'the sound of a moral voice', the sense of a difference between right and wrong. In Melanesia, he said, this fell far short of the orthodox Christian doctrine of sin (as an offence against God), but with their sense of right and wrong Melanesians were ready to hear a message of forgiveness and salvation. Thirdly, there was a belief in a future state. At death, they believed, part of the person does not die and in that afterlife the spirits of the dead do not all fare alike. This was a preparation for the idea of judgment.

Codrington's views became absorbed into the collective thinking of the Melanesian Mission. When the next generation of missionaries wrote about Melanesian religion and its relationship to the Christian God, they wrote in similar terms.³⁶ There was a consensus that missionaries should as far as possible build on existing beliefs. According to Bishop Cecil Wilson, the missionary 'is dealing with men who had been feeling after GOD, and had not found Him, but had satisfied the religious instincts GOD had given them with these gods ... They were not GOD, but they were steps leading to Him ...'.³⁷ The 'Melanesian is naturally religious,' wrote John Steward (later Bishop of Melanesia) in 1914, 'prayer,

sacrifice, sacraments, a future life, the ministry of angels, a Creator and a ruling Divine Father, are truths and practices by no means foreign to his mind.³⁸ George Warren, who during the interwar years was headmaster of the mission boys' school at Maravovo on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, told a meeting of mission supporters in London in 1935 that it was a mistake to think that the missionary was opposed to the interests of the anthropologist: 'Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil, and there is much in native life which is solid and good and strong.'³⁹

The second great ethnologist associated with the Melanesian Mission was Walter George Ivens, a New Zealander by birth, who joined the mission staff in 1895 and then spent 14 years as missionary at Ulawa and south Malaita, in the Solomon Islands. He later published two major works of anthropology, *Melanesians of the South-East Solomon Islands* (1927) and *The Island Builders of the Pacific* (1930), and also a *Dictionary and Grammar of the Language of Sa'a and Ulawa, Solomon Islands* (1918). Ivens was a gifted linguist who knew a great deal about the customs and languages of the people of Malaita, but he did not particularly like the objects of his study. In various mission publications, he wrote with condescension about 'the Melanesian mind'. The 'heathen' of Ulawa, he wrote in 1900, 'are utter slaves to habit, and it is impossible to hope to gain them over by any attempt to reason with them, for their logical faculties are completely undeveloped'.⁴⁰ New missionaries to Melanesia were advised that 'The ordinary Heathen person is plausible and one may say quite correctly that he has no knowledge of the truth ... His life is a life of suspicion and he is servile in his belief in the ghosts and spirits of his ancestors and in his fear of others'.⁴¹ He told mission supporters that the heathen 'knows nothing of the high virtues, of justice or mercy or love ... The climate he lives in produces laziness and indolence ... His religion renders him fearful and suspicious ... The moral law has but little claim upon him'.⁴² Despite the intellectual legacy of

Patteson and Codrington, Ivens did little to illuminate the connections between Western and Melanesian religious concepts. As a missionary, however, he sought the indigenisation of Christianity in social life. At Port Adam in south Malaita, for example, where porpoise hunting had always been in the hands of pagans, he encouraged the local Christians to take it up. He consecrated a new canoe house for the canoes to be used in the hunt and composed special prayers for the drive, to replace the traditional prayers to the ancestral 'ghosts' and spirits.⁴³

Charles Elliot Fox, more than anyone else in the Melanesian Mission in the 20th century, tried to understand Melanesian religion from within. Having graduated in geology from the University of New Zealand in 1901, he joined the Melanesian Mission the next year and became a teacher at St Barnabas', the central school on Norfolk Island. Bishop Cecil Wilson immediately recognised the unusual abilities of his new recruit. After ordaining Fox as deacon in March 1903, he wrote in his private diary:

A very clear-headed able little man ... [He] has a beautifully simple faith, & will do great things for M[elanesian] M[ission] if he keeps his health. He makes no reservation in his affirmation of belief, & seems very humble & all I wd. wish.⁴⁴

In 1911, Fox was sent to San Cristobal in the Solomon Islands, where he began a boys' boarding school at Pamua. There he collected material on the social organisation, religion and customs of the people of San Cristobal, which he submitted as a doctoral thesis to the University of New Zealand (LittD, 1922) and later published as *The Threshold of the Pacific* (1924). Fox remained in the Solomon Islands with only occasional spells of leave until 1973, when, at the age of 94, he returned permanently to a nursing home in New Zealand, where he died four years later.⁴⁵ In the postwar years, although some of his European colleagues were inclined to disparage his views, in Melanesian folklore he became a culture-

hero.⁴⁶ Stories circulated about his reputed supernatural powers, some of which he noted in his diary:

Me & the coconut. Boys told Michael [a missionary] a Roman priest & I were sitting under a coconut tree. He prayed & a branch fell down. I prayed and the whole tree fell down.⁴⁷

Fox was a true investigator, with enormous intellectual curiosity and a keen mind. Throughout his life he read voraciously, corresponded with dozens of friends and scholars all over the world, and played chess by airmail. More than any other European, it was often said, he came closer to understanding Melanesians — or rather, Melanesian males — from within. For 11 years from 1933, Fox was a member of an indigenous religious order, the Melanesian Brotherhood. On the night of his 85th birthday, in 1963, he had a dream that he was ‘with the Brothers, & Jesus came as a young Melanesian. He was happy with the Brothers & they with him, asked me to be his cookboy.’⁴⁸ Several years later he looked back with affection at the Solomon Islands that he had first encountered 60 years earlier:

I respect the old religion. They were laughed at for thinking their leading men could help them after death; what about Christians. They sacrificed; often I saw with awe. Was that so much worse than singing silly hymns in a stuffy church. So different a people without clothes. One felt so free ...⁴⁹

Fox himself was soaked in the traditions of the Melanesian Mission and was the author of its official history.⁵⁰ His own theology was a moderate Anglicanism of the *via media*. More than any other missionary in the Melanesian Mission, he transcended his culture and came to see the Christian God through Melanesian eyes.

The Melanesian Mission taught of a God who was a fulfilment rather than a denial of existing Melanesian beliefs. In this

it was quite different from the other Christian missions in its region of operation, which tended to view 'Christian' and 'Melanesian' as antithetical categories.⁵¹ The South Sea Evangelical Mission in the Solomon Islands and the Presbyterian Mission in Vanuatu were hostile to the traditional religion of the Islanders. The Methodist missionaries in the Solomons were doers rather than thinkers. The French Catholic missionary priests of the Marist order, although expert linguists, showed little interest in exploring the relationship of Christianity to traditional belief systems. It was the Anglican missionaries of the Melanesian Mission who pioneered the integration of Christianity with Melanesian culture.

Footnotes

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The Anglicans in New Guinea and the Torres Strait Islands

David Wetherell

Those damned churchmen are like the Papists, plenty of them willing to be martyrs.¹

This chapter compares New Guinea and Carpentaria, two neighbouring Anglican dioceses created in the western Pacific between 1898 and 1900. The New Guinea Anglican Mission, established by Albert Maclaren and Copland King, was regarded by its supporters during its 'golden age', in the postwar period up to 1960, as one of the glories of the Anglican Communion. Its bishop, Philip Strong, was accorded an honoured place at Lambeth Conferences; its workers, seemingly unbowed by physical deprivation, were acclaimed for upholding the highest ideals of self-sacrifice.

The Diocese of Carpentaria, created in 1900, had no such enduring reputation yet deserved it. Carpentaria encompassed some 965,000 square kilometres, or one-seventh of the land area of continental Australia.² It claimed to be the fourth-largest Anglican diocese in the world, consisting of the Torres Strait Islands, the

Cape York Peninsula north of Cairns, the Gulf country, and the whole of the Northern Territory.

The reasons for the founding of the two missions differed. The annexation of British New Guinea (Papua), according to a resolution passed in 1886 by the General Synod of the Church of England in Australia, 'imposed direct obligation upon the Church of England to provide for the spiritual welfare both of the natives and the settlers'.³ But the ascendancy of humanitarian over economic goals in the administration of Sir William MacGregor and his successors meant that the settler population was always small. Beyond the two town parishes of Port Moresby and Samarai, the whole of Anglican effort was concerned with the Melanesian population.

In Carpentaria, by contrast, the extension of Anglican mission work to the Melanesians of the Torres Strait and the Aborigines on the mainland owed its origin primarily to the movement of the European population, which followed the mineral boom in north Queensland. Carpentaria was to be a 'white settlement' diocese, one intended as much for Europeans as for indigenes. After the gold and silver discoveries at Ravenswood and the Palmer River (1868-73), a wave of white settlers had moved to the north. As one commentator wrote laconically, while the gold boom lasted, the Australian continent, like a ship, 'developed a temporary list to the northeast, during which everything and everybody tended to roll in that direction'.⁴

In Papua, the Anglicans were the pioneer foreign residents, regarded as ghosts in some places, the first Europeans the people had seen. In the Torres Strait Islands, the Anglicans were latecomers, arriving when European influences had long been active. Forty years of London Missionary Society evangelisation had occurred before the Anglicans arrived.⁵ The days were long gone when missionaries might have been regarded as 'ghosts'.

In 1915, Gilbert White, Bishop of Carpentaria, and F. W. Walker, a representative of the L.M.S., toured the islands to

announce the transfer from the society to the Church of England. When the Anglicans arrived in 1915 it was to inherit a fully equipped church. Altogether, 55 Loyalty Island teachers and wives and some two dozen of their children, had lived in the islands after the first landing in 1871, followed by a succession of Samoan and Ellice Islands pastors from the early 1880s. Chapels had been built on 11 of the islands. The LMS held freehold land on seven islands and was represented by nine pastors, annual visits being paid by the missionary from Daru in New Guinea, where the LMS had its district headquarters. By 1915, a clear pattern of religious acculturation had emerged. The Islanders had endured a fairly strict autocracy under the Polynesian pastors, though this despotism was softened by a new repertoire of dancing, cooking and other household arts. There had been some Islander intermarriage with non-mission Samoans and other South Sea Islanders. For Torres Strait men, work on pearling luggers now alternated with a life of fishing, gardening and churchgoing. They sang hymns in the vernacular written by Pacific Island teachers to tunes originating in the English Nonconformist and Moody and Sankey tradition.⁶ The mass of the Torres Strait people under the LMS, Gilbert White wrote, had become not only Christians in name, but 'also to a very large extent in practice'.⁷

With a Polynesian version of Nonconformist Christianity so visibly entrenched in island culture, the question must be asked, why did the LMS feel compelled to hand over its mission to the Anglicans in 1915? There were three predominant reasons. First, the society was understaffed in Papua and could not provide a European superintendent, while the Anglican Church on Thursday Island was anxious to expand and possessed the means to do so. The district missionary, stationed on Daru, visited twice, and sometimes only once, a year. It was more difficult for the district missionary to visit when the application of the Commonwealth Navigation Act to Papua from 1914 separated Papua for tariff

purposes from Australia, including the Torres Strait. Second, the sole representatives of the LMS were Samoan and Ellice Island pastors. Third, there was continuing friction between the Samoan pastors or *faiifeau* and the state schoolmasters settled on six of the islands by the Queensland government.⁸

The arrival of the Anglican missions in New Guinea and the Torres Strait was accompanied by the efflorescence of cult activity. In far eastern Papua, this took the form of a minor syncretistic movement led by Abrieka Dipa of Taupota village; and in the Torres Strait, the 'German Wislin' movement of Saiba Island. Dipa, a young man with 'a pleasant face and a merry disposition', had been recruited for plantation work in Queensland and had been the broker in the sale of Dogura plateau as a mission headquarters in 1891. The seller, a man called Gaireka of Wamira village, was then made to surrender to Dipa half the purchase price as a brokerage fee for his services; for this he was sent home to Taupota by Maclaren, the founding missionary. When Dipa arrived at Taupota he began wearing a red calico band on his arm and conducting his own church instruction or *tapwaroro*. Two years later Harry Mark, the pioneer Queensland Melanesian teacher on the mission, was sent to counteract Dipa at Taupota. By then the Dipa sect had become entirely separate from the English-led mission and was holding its own services. Soon Mark was trying to impose the mission's teachings on Dipa's followers by conducting an Anglican school and canvassing Taupotans 'to tell them no work Sunday'.⁹

In Carpentaria the cult came before the mission. A prophet had appeared at Saibai before Gilbert White's tour of 1915, warning the villagers of the 'New Messiah' soon to appear in the islands.¹⁰ This prophecy was an offshoot of the 'German Wislin' movement, whose doctrines had first been announced two years earlier and which had already become an established cult. The devotees anticipated the coming of ancestors bringing money, flour and calico; their leaders were three men who were called captains or

'generals'. F. W. Walker had encountered the leading prophet or 'New Messiah' of Saibal and heard of the 'consequent down fall of the white man'.¹¹ It had been prophesied that the millennium would begin on Good Friday 1914; when it did not materialise, the day was postponed. The prophet reported that a steamer would tie up at a jetty that would rise out of the sea.¹² The cult had been strongly opposed by the Samoan LMS pastor on Saibal. It is possible that White's arrival on the ship *Goodwill* with Walker might have been seen as the fulfilment of the cult leader's prophecy. As a Saibal elder welcoming the bishop said, 'We are like children who have lost their father and mother. We do not know what to do or where to look. You will be our father and show us the way to go and how to live.'¹³ The historian must rest content with only a partial understanding of the background to the welcome given to the Anglicans on Saibal and elsewhere in the strait.

Whatever the differences in the circumstances of their founding, the hierarchies of the Anglican missions assumed a similar character once they began work. In the 50 years before World War II, 186 foreign workers enlisted in the New Guinea Mission and 74 in Carpentaria.¹⁴ Leading each mission was a succession of English-born bishops; Australians mingled with Englishmen among its clergy; the laywomen and laymen were overwhelmingly Australian. In New Guinea, there were also 46 Melanesian teachers from the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (New Hebrides) who had originally been recruited for work on the Queensland sugar plantations and there converted to Christianity.¹⁵

Henry Newton, educated at Sydney University and Merton College, Oxford, and bishop of the dioceses of Carpentaria and New Guinea in succession, was exceptional among the leaders in being Australian-born. He was the adopted son of an Australian parson. More typically, the bishops were the sons of English country clergy possessing close links with the 'squirearchy'. Gilbert White, Bishop of Carpentaria (1900-15), was a descendant of the

famous 18th-century parson-naturalist Gilbert White of Selborne, whom he followed to Oriel College, Oxford. The longest-serving bishops (Stephen Davies, with 28 years in Carpentaria 1921–49, and Philip Strong with 26 years in New Guinea, 1936–62) had remarkably similar backgrounds. Davies' childhood had been spent in a rectory in Shropshire, a county bypassed by the industrial revolution and in whose villages squire and rector were often neighbours. Strong, also a son of a vicarage, was a grandson of a prominent landowning squire whose seat was at Sherborne Castle in Dorset. Both bishops were Cambridge graduates. Moreover, each had close relatives in the British armed services.¹⁶

Below the bishops were the clerical and lay workers, a few of whom served terms in both missions. From the beginning, there was a steady trickle of Anglican workers from Carpentaria to New Guinea, staff who had had some previous acquaintance with Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders.¹⁷ Although the missions shared a proportion of their workers, there were marked differences in the healthiness of the two regions where they worked. Northern Papua was more isolated from communication and more dangerous to foreigners than Torres Strait. Travelling between the Australian port of Cooktown and the mission's headquarters at Dogura took early volunteers a week. The discovery of the link between malaria and the anopheles mosquito lay ahead, and the morbidity and mortality rate among the pioneer New Guinea workers, including the 46 Melanesian teachers from Queensland, was much greater than in Carpentaria. A typically sombre entry from the first bishop's diary was from May 1899: 'Willie Holi dangerously ill. Miss Sully down with her worst attack of fever. Ambrose, Jimmy Nogar and Miss Thomson ill. Miss McLaughlin kept school going splendidly. Mr King down with fever.'¹⁸ Because the Torres Strait was healthier, the two missions presented volunteers with differing expectations of service. A Papuan who accompanied the first Bishop of New Guinea on a recruiting tour of Queensland in 1906

said the bishop told his South Sea Islander audiences they would die in New Guinea if they volunteered. They could not expect to return to their homes. A young European recruit was overheard in Cooktown buying his passage to New Guinea: 'But I shall not want a return ticket,' he said, 'I shall want only one way. I shall die there.'¹⁹

By contrast, service in Carpentaria was regarded by most volunteers as of limited duration. From the inauguration of the diocese in 1900, clergy had arrived on Thursday Island on the understanding that they had come only 'to serve for a term in the north' before returning to southern suburban parishes. The Torres Strait was not a malaria-ridden 'white man's grave'. In the New Guinea Mission seven died by violence (murdered by Japanese troops), and 25 others during service, death in many cases being hastened by hardship. The New Guinea Mission, with its 'Exhausted Workers' Fund', its flimsy bush houses, poor nutrition and general physical deprivation, was a byword for sacrifice. The better health record of Carpentaria's workers was a corollary to greater comfort and proximity to hospitals in northern Australia. With the Japanese attack on Rabaul in January 1942, the New Guinea Anglican staff were exhorted in a ringing broadcast by their bishop to stay. All except one did. In the Torres Strait, the remaining European priest fled with a suitcase.²⁰

A further distinction between the two missions lay in their use of South Sea Islands agents. The Loyalty Islands and Samoan pastors who laid the foundations of Torres Strait Island Christianity were powerfully influenced by Polynesian chiefly or *matai* models.²¹ The 48 Queensland Melanesian teachers who helped extend New Guinea Anglicanism contrasted vividly with the Samoan patriarchs in the Torres Strait.

In erudition and personal authority, the Polynesian pastor had advantages over the unlettered Melanesian cane cutter, adrift from his home society and recruited for labour on the sugar plantations in Queensland. But the Melanesians did not see

themselves as of a higher caste than their converts; they were prepared to do physical work; they conversed in the language of the people; married women from the Papuan villages; and died where they had worked.²² No Polynesian in the strait, or in any other LMS or Methodist area in Papua New Guinea, seems to have come as close to coastal villagers as did the Queensland Melanesian teachers of the New Guinea Anglican Mission.

European missionaries of the Church of England were, as Newton said, 'rather higger mugger' in their work, not equipped by any professional missionary training or by anthropology.²³ The idea that there were distinct 'missionary methods' gained ground only slowly in Australia. This mattered less in the Torres Strait, where Anglican methods were based on the LMS model already established. Though the leading clergy in both dioceses had Oxbridge backgrounds, no missionary until the 1930s possessed any 'scientific' equipment in such disciplines as anthropology and comparative religion. In 1923, Professor Baldwin Spencer of the Australian National Research Council had proposed the creation of a chair of anthropology at Sydney University, arguing that 'it was quite clear that officials, missionaries included ... should possess requisite anthropological knowledge'.²⁴ Australian Anglicans were required after 1925 to study for two years at 'Cromanhurst', the Australian Board of Missions residential college at Burwood in Sydney, but there was no specific course in anthropology. After 1936, all trainee Australian Anglican missionaries were required to complete a course in anthropology under the Rev. Dr A. P. Elkin, Professor of Anthropology at Sydney University. Though Bronislaw Malinowski had commended Henry Newton's *In Far New Guinea* (1914), there was no one else in the Anglican churches in Papua or Carpentaria to compare with the disciplined anthropological knowledge of J. H. Holmes or Bert Brown of the LMS in Papua.²⁵

Yet, because of the English public school and university education of the Anglican leaders, there was a breadth of spirit and

an intellectual tolerance that marked them out from their evangelical forebears in the South Seas, and many of their contemporaries in other missions as well. The Pacific Anglicans subscribed to the Fall of Man as did other missionaries, but this did not lead them to act against the traditional societies of the strait and Papua, as had their evangelical predecessors. Anglo-Catholics stressed continuity with the past. Earlier evangelical missions had sought to create a new cultural environment to help converts make a 'clean break' with the past. Bishop Gilbert White's aphorism — 'Christ never promised to give the church complete truth. He promised that his spirit should guide her into all truth' — endorsed the spirit of reverent agnosticism towards Melanesian culture evident in early Anglican writing in Papua and the strait.²⁶ The missionary view of north-east Papuan villagers and of the Torres Strait Islanders as 'gentlemen' whose community life was based on 'open-handed, open-hearted generosity', and who were 'not savages but Saints', reflected attitudes that appear in Anglo-Catholic literature from both missions.²⁷ However, in theological terms, it has been suggested that, in their heartfelt admiration for the virtues of the 'natural man' of the Pacific, these Anglicans came close to the heresy of Pelagianism, in departing so far from a belief in the corrupting gravity of original sin.

The Torres Strait and New Guinea missions were part of the 'biretta belt' permeating Anglican churchmanship in north-eastern Australia. Their Anglo-Catholic heritage was marked by an emphasis on the sacraments and ritual; the Church of the Fathers rather than the sects of the Reformation. And guardianship over the church in the hands of the rather than in the British Parliament and the judiciary. In New Guinea and Carpentaria, the arrival of 'ritualistic' clergy provoked a short-lived flurry of opposition among resident Protestants to try to keep the 'Roman' influence within the Church of England at bay.²⁸

Far more serious, however, was the loss of support for the New Guinea and Torres Strait missions within the largest centres of

Anglican population in Australia — the predominantly conservative evangelical diocese of Sydney and the broad-to-low church diocese of Melbourne.

Newly elected bishops of Carpentaria found themselves leading a diocese with two widely differing varieties of churchmanship within their territory — Anglo-Catholic and evangelical. This variety of churchmanship raised questions for Carpentaria, which the more ‘monochrome’ Anglo-Catholic Diocese of New Guinea had not to face. The staff of the three Church Missionary Society (CMS) missions were evangelicals, mainly from Sydney. They had been sent by the society and were licensed by the bishop on arrival.²⁹ By contrast, the Anglo-Catholic workers in the ABM-supported missions in the diocese saw themselves as ‘the authentic representatives of a diocese of the Catholic Church’.

In the Torres Strait Islands, the Anglicans accommodated with little difficulty the Christianity they found already there. By the time the LMS departed, some characteristics of Polynesian Christianity had become firmly engrained: the authoritarian pastor, acting in a presiding and ceremonial role rather than one that required physical work; the reciprocity between pastor and people to ensure a supply of food and services; the fostering of inter-village and inter-island rivalry to maintain generosity in the annual Mei collections (organised after the Exeter Hall meetings of the LMS held each May). These were absorbed with little change alongside Polynesian cooking and horticulture, the legacy of Polynesian hymns characterised by a two-part harmony with the parts moving independently, the parts sometimes in antiphon and sometimes overlapping.³⁰

On all the inhabited islands, too, there were churches, symbols of village pride, some with distinctive Samoan features. From 1914, the plain LMS chapels, originally given biblical names such as ‘Bethel’ (on Badu), ‘Etena’ or Eden (Mabuiag), ‘Panetta’ (St Paul’s Landing) (Saibai), ‘Salom’ or ‘Peace’ (Yam), were rededicated

by the Anglicans in honour of saints. The huge pulpits that had dominated their interiors were dismantled and the timber sometimes used for altars. Walls were rebuilt to take in Anglican additions of sanctuary, chancel, baptistry, vestry and side chapels. Arches leading to side aisles for overflowing numbers were common.

Anxious to preserve continuity with the past, the Anglicans commemorated the LMS pioneers, not Gilbert White, as founders of the Torres Strait Mission, and in the vestries of their enlarged churches they placed portraits of Samuel McFarlane and James Chalmers. The cathedral font on Thursday Island was dedicated to Chalmers and his colleague Oliver Tomkins (killed at Goaribari in Papua in 1901); even Chalmers' camera was put on display in the Bishop's house; it was still there in the 1920s. 'Everything possible linking up with past days is being carefully preserved', said the priest-director of the mission to the LMS directors.³¹

Common Anglo-Catholic and Nonconformist Evangelical boundaries in Papua through the 'spheres of influence' policy made the contrast in attitudes to pre-European culture even more striking. In eastern Papua, Suau dancing and *soi* (death) feasting was discouraged in the Kwato District of the LMS, while the *walaga* feasting, which was comparable, was observed with interest by Dogura churchmen only a few hours' sail away from Kwato (though Kwato encouraged traditional carving). In the Torres Strait, the negative posture of the Samoans towards elements of traditional culture, particularly dancing and carving, were reinforced by the Old Testament teaching imparted at the Samoan training college at Malua. Masks and various carvings, especially those that were erotic in content, were seen as an offence in the eyes of God. When the society's influence gained hold on Murray Island under Samuel McFarlane and the Loyalty Islanders, a 'ceremony of burning the idols' was held.³² In the Murray Group, the island of Waler had been reserved exclusively for the priests of Walet, who visited it for feasting and the preserving of the dead. The priests, or

zogo-le of the cult, known as *Malu-Bomai*, had held sway over the 800 or so people in the villages of the chief island of Mer. According to his great-grandson, Dave Passi, the priest-headman, Poey Passi, had become 'fed up' with Samoan restrictions, and Gilbert White's tour in 1915 had come 'just in time' to prevent widespread disaffection, possibly an open clash.³³

On Mer, episcopal rule rekindled traditional leadership. The hereditary chiefly headship received an impetus when Poey (Tauki) Passi, heir of the last *zogo-le*, began studying for ordination two years after the cession. Kabai Pilot, a priest ordained into Anglican orders later, was a descendant of the last priest-chief of nearby Darnley Island. The Anglicans' assumption of some sort of continuity between pre-contact hereditary priesthood and their own priesthood was based on an appreciation, possibly somewhat romanticised, of patriarchal Torres Strait Island religion. The Islanders had, said W. H. MacFarlane, priest-director of the strait, 'a powerful secret society, which controlled the moral welfare of the islands and possessed a defined code of rules with a sacred ministry of three orders'.³⁴ This was seen as corresponding neatly with the threefold ministry within the Anglican Church. No parallel existed among the more egalitarian societies of north-eastern Papua. Bishop Montagu Stone-Wigg's citing of a verse from the Psalms to signify the ordination of the first Papuan priest, Peter Rautamara — 'He taketh up the simple out of the dust ... (to) set him with the princes, even with the princes of his people'³⁵ — was purely figurative. There were no hereditary priest-chiefs, far less 'princes' in the north-eastern Papuan societies that accommodated the Anglicans; whereas in the Torres Strait, the dubbing as 'princes of the people' the sons of hereditary priest-chiefs was a little less figurative and more real.

There were marked differences between the behaviour of Anglicans in Papua New Guinea and in Carpentaria when faced with a challenge to their monopoly over education by government authority. In Papua, there was a nervous dread of government

influence. When a native taxation ordinance was promulgated in 1918 with the specific goal of augmenting mission school funds by government grants from taxation, the Anglican Church told the Government that any interference in its schools would be 'strongly resented' and they had to be assured that the Government did not intend 'in the least' to disturb the arrangement by which the church maintained control over its schools.³⁶

If there was a wariness towards the Government's influence in Papua (and, in return, a jealousy of mission power among some Papuan government officers), the opposite was true in Carpentaria. In far north Queensland, the Diocese of Carpentaria, like the Melanesian Mission, possessed something of the privileged position of an English episcopal mission. This was due partly to the accident of personality. While Queensland premiers were usually either Presbyterian or Roman Catholic, on Thursday Island the first three Residents were Anglican. In addition, the military garrison that had been set up on Thursday Island in 1895 used the cathedral for church parades. Subsequent Protectors (later Directors of Native Affairs) were Roman Catholics. The idea of Christianity and civilisation being two sides of the same coin, and of officers and missionaries fighting a common battle, was strong in the Torres Strait. An Anglican missionary, Florence Buchanan, after her death in 1913 known as the 'Apostle of Moa', used to write on her school blackboards: 'One King One Flag One Fleet One Empire.'³⁷

In the Torres Strait, the mission accepted government schooling for its children and Queensland Government teachers worked in close contact with mission authorities. In 1920, for example, two islands — Boigu and Dauan — too small for government schools, were provided with church schools by the diocese. The schools were under Islander deacons assisted by Islander teachers. As these schools became firmly rooted, they were handed over by the church to the Government, to be operated along the same lines as other schools.³⁸ The idea that officers and

missionaries were on the same side was dimmed in Papua by virulent conflicts between English missionaries and Australian officers in Mime Bay (1902-04) and Tufi (in the late 1930s). It is difficult to imagine the New Guinea Anglican Mission handing over any of its schools to the Papuan Government.

On Thursday Island there was a strong sense of the Anglican Church's civic role. In a commercial and official community, the church fulfilled many social functions through its organisations, such as the Harbour Lights Guild for visiting seamen, Mothers' Union, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, Japanese Seamen's and South Sea Islanders' Home. The white community was well represented on the Carpentaria Diocesan Council. The influence of secular Europeans was far more limited in New Guinea, where the mission headquarters of Dogura stood in complete geographical and psychological isolation from the commercial community of Samarai, a day's sail away. In Papua, things were different again: the links between the church and the business community were not close.

The two missions also differed in their treatment of the mixed-race population. In Papua, 'half-caste' children were isolated from their mothers and placed in St Agnes' Home at Doubina near Dogura after being mandated to the church by the Government. They were dressed in sailor suits and brought up as English children. In the Torres Strait, the mixed-race people were not segregated from others but integrated. But the church in Carpentaria accepted a government 'quarantine' to prevent further racial mixing, including the placing of Torres Strait Islanders from 1904 under Queensland's Aboriginal Protection Act of 1897. By this enactment, a virtual cordon was thrown around the islands to limit the movement of their dwindling population. The cordon would also prevent settlement in the Torres Strait Islands by Europeans, South Sea Islanders and Japanese.

The economic contrast between the two missions was striking: the comparative financial affluence of the strait congregations

was due to pearling and shell-fishing. There was a severe dearth of money in north-east Papua, where wages from indentured labourers returning from Milne Bay plantations provided the only cash in circulation. Asked whether New Guinea would ever be a self-supporting diocese, second bishop Gerald Sharp (1910–21) said the answer was no, except in places where there was a settled white population: 'For what can the natives give in support of their church?' The village people had nothing to offer except curios and vegetables.³⁹ In New Guinea, the faithful could contribute tobacco in a box at the church door. In the Torres Strait, the people gave money as well as food, and often lavishly, in the Polynesian manner, after 30 years of Samoan tutelage. Sometimes the New Guinea indigenous teacher or priest appealing for contributions was told, 'You are a *dimdim* [European], so you must pay for everything.'

Financially far ahead in giving than their counterparts in New Guinea, the Torres Strait Islanders in Carpentaria's offshore mission were, by the 1920s, beginning to fulfil the principle embodied in Henry Venn's 19th-century vision of a self-supporting and self-propagating church. For their first curacies, Torres Strait clergy were normally sent as 'missionary' chaplains to mainland Aboriginal settlements, particularly to the Edward River people, whom Bishop Davies light-heartedly referred to as 'the wild men of the diocese'. Strait teachers and clergy were paid from an annual grant by the Australian Board of Missions in Sydney, supplemented by island offerings by divers from pearl-shell profits. By the late 1920s, it seemed to Davies that Islanders should take counsel in a self-governing Carpentaria diocesan synod. In 1931, 17 European and Islander delegates (12 clerical, five lay) met on Thursday Island as the first Carpentaria Synod. The synods were examples of Islander-European decision-making in action. Like the Diocese of Carpentaria itself, they were without equal in other Anglican missionary enterprises in the South Pacific before 1939.⁴⁰ The Diocese of New Guinea did not hold a diocesan (or 'provincial') synod until 1977.

The synods held at Thursday Island provided occasions for reappraisals of church, and sometimes government, policy. Concerned to preserve harmony between church and state, the Carpentaria Diocesan Synod and the annual New Guinea conference of missionaries rarely criticised publicly the performance of governments. On at least two occasions there were unpublished criticisms by Anglican bishops of the actions of individual government officers. But Stephen Davies used the 1935 Carpentaria Synod to make a trenchant attack on the 'Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Acts Amendment Act', which had been passed by the Queensland Parliament the previous year. He called it 'an infringement of the rights of citizenship possessed by some of the coloured people of Queensland'. This led to a synod motion urging the Federal Government to strip Queensland and other states of power over Aborigine and Torres Strait Islanders and to assume control of all Aboriginal people within the Commonwealth. Such resolutions mirrored the dominance of the bishop in carrying the Carpentaria Synod with him. Harmony between the church and officials was evident more at the local, Thursday Island level rather than at a state level in Brisbane. The motion urging removal of power over Aborigines and Islanders to the Federal Government was later unsuccessfully proposed by Davies to the Queensland Provincial Synod in 1935. A few months later, during a four-month strike by Torres Strait trochus divers, Davies wrote to the Governor of Queensland suggesting that the system of payment, which entailed a deduction from the wage by the Protector, was among the causes of the strike.⁴¹

Though Carpentaria had a synod and New Guinea had none, both were dominated by their bishops. One reason why Davies remained monarch of his diocese was the declining European population of northern Australia. In contrast with New Guinea, Carpentaria had originally been created as a diocese whose

income was expected to come largely from white settlement; but steadily and inexorably, these settlements were becoming ghost towns; and Carpentaria was becoming more Melanesian and Aboriginal in character. Between 1910 and 1930, for example, the European population of Cooktown and of Croydon-Normanton in the Gulf declined from 900 to 250 and from 2,200 to 450 respectively.

While the European part of the Carpentaria Diocese atrophied, life in the Melanesian churches of the strait prospered on its mixed subsistence and trochus economy. Voluntary labour, enhanced by pearl-shell earnings, accumulated during the 1920s, enabling building programs to continue during the Depression.

The general prosperity of church life in the strait was not confined to church-building. There were flourishing branches of the Australian Board of Missions youth groups (later known as Comrades of St George) and the Boy Scout movement, with annual camps under priestly leadership. The liturgy was more elaborate than earlier, with the use of incense, stations of the cross, and processions through village lanes in the islands, often led by young trepang fishermen wearing vestments. Nor did this enthusiasm abate during wartime. Some 830 Islander men, from a total Islands population of 3,500, enlisted in the Torres Strait Defence Force; and, by the peak of enlistment, in most families 'every male of military age was serving, fathers often side by side with their sons'.⁴² During the war, some Islanders on Kubin Island said they saw in the sky the arms of Christ outstretched over the Torres Strait, which they took as a portent that their island homes would always be protected from invasion.

A strand common to both missions, and a byproduct of their Anglo-Catholic convictions, was their sympathy for the cause of Christian Socialism. Through F. W. Walker's Papuan Industries ('PI') Company, based from 1904 on Badu Island in the Strait, marine produce was bought from Islanders who purchased

consumer goods in exchange. A primary objective of the PI was assisting groups of Islanders to build or buy their own pearling luggers. Inspired by the PI, the Moa Fishing Company was formed under the eye of the resident Anglican priest-director of the Strait Mission in 1925. The company was financed by worker-shareholders in a venture described approvingly in Carpentaria publications as 'communitic'. Bishop Stephen Davies himself was described by his own family in England as 'a socialist'.⁴³

The short-lived Moa Fishing Company anticipated a more explicitly socialistic centre on the Australian mainland region of the Diocese of Carpentaria during the episcopate of fourth bishop John Hudson (1950-60). This was the Lockhart River Cooperative, which owed its origins to Alf Clint. Coming from a working-class background in Balmain, Sydney, Clint was a Christian Socialist who possessed, in the words of the writer Kylie Tennant, an 'old fashioned view of monopoly capitalism and the capitalist class ... oppressing the poor workers'.⁴⁴

The aim of the Lockhart River Cooperative was to encourage Aborigines to earn a cash income through *bêche-de-mer* (trepan) and trochus shell for pearl buttons. Father Clint provided Gona's Papuans and Lockhart's Aborigines with a link with the world 'that made them feel they were part of a valuable movement, not just a little lost-and-forgotten mission at the edge of the sea'.⁴⁵ The Lockhart Cooperative closed in the mid-1950s, a victim of the worldwide recession in the pearling industry. The wartime discovery of synthetic resins had spelt doom for the world price of pearl shell for buttons and ornaments.

In postwar times the paths of the two missions diverged sharply. More than any other cause, this was a reflection of political geography. Any lingering expectation that the territory of Papua and New Guinea might join northern Australia to become an integral part of the Australian Commonwealth was dispelled by the events of the early 1960s. From the Sixties, the Carpentaria

Anglicans were caught up in the momentum of the worldwide movement for civil rights, in the form of racial equality and better living conditions for Aboriginal and Islander people.

During the colonial period, before the question of independence for Papua New Guinea arose, the two missions behaved differently in their relations with governments. While the New Guinea Anglican Mission had stood aloof from Papuan government influence and avoided as far as possible leaning on the Administration, Carpentaria was in partnership with the Queensland Government from the start. In practice, the Government delegated responsibility for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to the churches. A coherent Aboriginal policy had not been worked out, and governments thrust most educational and administrative responsibility onto the missions. In return for the churches shouldering nearly all responsibility, the Queensland Government provided much more support for missions than any other Australian state.⁴⁶

In Papua New Guinea, the Anglican Mission experienced strain with government departments over a division of responsibility after the Pacific War. The conflict concerned the postwar expansion of the Government into education, a field that the church felt was properly its own.⁴⁷ Anglican resistance to the 'encroachment' of government schools reached its apogee in the 1950s, during the closing years of Bishop Philip Strong's episcopate, when there was steady resistance to the founding of government schools, particularly in the Northern (Oro) District of Papua. Needless to say, the church was forced to capitulate, while maintaining control over its leading secondary-level boarding schools.⁴⁸

From the 1960s, the future of the New Guinea Mission was inescapably bound up with the recognition that Papua and New Guinea would not be a state of Australia but would become a self-governing nation. Pressure for constitutional change had been building for 15 years. The parallel for the Anglican and other churches was self-evident. Early in 1977, 18 months after national

independence, the New Guinea Mission was divided into five dioceses and ceased to be part of the ecclesiastical Province of Queensland under the nominal authority of the Archbishop of Brisbane.

The major issue facing Carpentaria, with its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander majority, was Aboriginal living standards, not fending off a government education system, far less dealing with the consequences of national independence. In Carpentaria, the church partly set the pace, leading the criticism internally and in public of previous neglect of Aborigines and collaborating in the transfer of all administrative and financial responsibility for Aboriginal missions to the Government.

John Matthews, the newly appointed Bishop of Carpentaria (1960-73), had been priest-director of the Torres Strait Mission and, after his election as bishop, he had toured the diocese. According to Noel Loos, the new bishop was 'appalled' at the state of the missions, writing that Lockhart, Mitchell (Kowanyama) and Edward River missions were 'almost at the point of disintegrating' because of lack of staff. Kowanyama and Edward River missions in particular were in a ruinous condition; in Kowanyama there were only three drinking taps for 500 people.⁴⁹ The squalor of Aboriginal missions run by the Diocese of Carpentaria was itself testimony to the Government's 70-year practice of using the religious organisations to delegate responsibility while itself avoiding expenditure.

Bishop Matthews participated in increasing criticism of the Queensland Government's record on Aboriginal and Islander affairs. Matthews, unlike Stephen Davies, tended to express his views in combative terms. He appointed a church committee to examine the Aboriginal Preservation and Protection Acts 1939-46 and the Torres Strait Islander Act of 1939, which entrusted the 5,000 Melanesians to a Protector of Islanders, an appointee of Queensland's Department of Native Affairs (DNA). 'When circumlocutions are

unravelling,' Matthews' 1961 committee reported, the acts denied Islanders freedom to control their own property or to travel; and it was 'misleading' of the Government 'to pretend the restrictions are not there'.⁵⁰ At the same time as Matthews' committee made its report, Frank W. Coaldrake, Chairman of the ABM (1957–67), published a booklet urging ABM supporters to support the struggle for Aboriginal citizenship rights. Coaldrake criticised the denial of full citizenship to Islanders, describing them as 'Anglicans in poverty — Anglicans in bondage' from which, he asserted, 'it might well be our duty to free them'.⁵¹

The ABM criticism over Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal policy was part of a wider movement towards the assertion of citizenship rights and better conditions for Aboriginal people in terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Like other churches conducting Aboriginal missions, the Anglicans found themselves caught up in an exploration of the legal right, or the lack of it, that Aborigines and Islanders had to their land, an investigation that resulted in the Australian Council of Churches' support for compensation for the loss of land.

The question must be asked, why were the Anglicans so tardy in pursuing Aboriginal rights? The answer seems clear. Matthews' predecessors in Carpentaria had evolved church policy during the preceding 60 years, when the eventual extinction of the Aboriginal people was awaited as a certainty and neither 'citizenship' nor 'land rights' were seen as practical issues. Bishop George Frodeharn of north Queensland had cried out in 1908: 'The Aborigines are disappearing. In the course of a generation or two the last Australian blackfellow will have turned his face to warm mother earth ... Missionary work then may be only smoothing the pillow of a dying race.'⁵² But it was realised in church circles 20 years later (before being accepted in government policy) that Aborigines were not dying out and, as Bishop Stephen Davies of Carpentaria was prominent in saying, it was chiefly on

mission stations that the decline in Aboriginal population had been reversed. Matthews sought greatly increased government subsidies for Carpentaria's three Aboriginal missions; and he then suggested that the people of all three missions be given better food rations, housing, educational and medical facilities and more enhanced employment prospects than the Church could provide. They would then have to move and become the Government's administrative and financial responsibility.

In 1962, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders participated in a federal election for the first time; and in two Carpentaria missions this was followed by the popular election of councillors to replace the outworn mission-nominated councillor system. Cyclone Dora in February 1964 presented Bishop Matthews with an opportunity by demolishing wholesale the decaying Kowanyama and Edward River missions. The Government had by then accepted responsibility for rebuilding the two missions at standards comparable with government settlements, and the Australian Board of Missions raised \$84,000 through an ecumenical appeal.⁵³ Within two years of Dora, the settlements were being rebuilt, and Bishop Matthews decided to transfer all the Aboriginal missions on Cape York Peninsula to Queensland Government administration. The takeover of Lockhart River, Mitchell River and Edward River Missions took place on May 1, 1967. As Loos puts it crisply, 'By 1967 the [Queensland] Government's cheap ride at the expense of the Anglican Church and to the cruel detriment of the Aboriginal people was over.'⁵⁴

The Anglican churches in New Guinea and Carpentaria began in the 1890s with markedly different goals, one as a mission to 'pagans' and the other as a church for settlers. From the 1960s, with the destiny of the territory of Papua New Guinea determined as that of a future independent state, the New Guinea Diocese began appointing indigenous bishops and cut its legal ties with the Anglican Church in Australia. Carpentaria weakened gradually as a

diocese in the same period. It was absorbed into the parent North Queensland Diocese in 1996. By then, its work was over.

Beginning in the opening years of John Matthews' reign during the early 1960s, Carpentaria had shed its administrative and financial commitment to Aboriginal missions in favour of government supervision. Aboriginal missions were moved to towns and became Aboriginal settlements. More broadly, the Anglican Church in Carpentaria responded to, and hastened in its own area, the impulse in Australia towards an improvement in Aboriginal and Islander living conditions, ethnic Aboriginal identity in place of assimilation, citizenship and land rights. The Mabo decision by the High Court of Australia in 1992, and the Wik judgment that followed it four years later, was something of a watershed. In the 1992 judgment, the High Court ruled that, putting to one side 'land leased to the Trustees of the Australian Board of Missions (Anglican)', the Meriam people were 'entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation and enjoyment of the lands of the Murray Islands'.⁵⁵ The judgment ended forever the legal concept of *terra nullius* in Australia — that the continent was unoccupied before European settlement.

One of the two surviving Murray Island litigants before the High Court in 1992 was the Anglican priest Dave Passi, great-grandson of the last *zogo-le* of Mer. Passi advanced the argument that God had not been absent from Meriam society before the coming of missionaries. Traditional religion, he said, had an integral relationship with mission Christianity in the same way as the theology of the Old Testament had with that of the New Testament.⁵⁶ The Queensland judge who had heard this interpretation described Passi's stand as idiosyncratic.⁵⁷ But Passi continued to argue, as he had earlier, that the traditional Meriam religion was fulfilled by the Christian faith. 'Gods many' had become a unified 'vision of God'. In their own way, Passi's words echoed the writing of the Anglo-Catholic pioneers in the Torres

Strait and New Guinea who had trained and ordained his great-grandfather. While cherishing the memory of their LMS predecessors, these Anglo-Catholics in practice departed from their Christian iconoclasm. Like earlier churchmen in the western Pacific in the Melanesian Mission, New Guinea and Carpentaria Anglicans 'respected the traditions of Melanesian villagers because they revered their own'.⁵⁸

Footnotes

- 1 C. A. W. Monckton, *New Guinea Recollections* (London, 1934), p. 75.
- 2 *The Carpentarian* (hereinafter TC) Thursday Island May 1930.
- 3 Church of England in Australia, Proceedings of the General Synod Session (1886), Res. 14.
- 4 J. O. Feetham and W. V. Rymer (eds), *North Queensland Jubilee Book 1878–1928* (Townsville, 1929), p. 13.
- 5 J. Bayton, *Cross Over Carpentaria* (Brisbane, 1965), pp. 41–59. The small Anglican mission at St Paul's on Moa Island was created as a settlement for remnants of the Queensland Melanesian labourers left in far north Queensland after the repatriation of the Melanesians 1904–7.
- 6 J. Beckett, E. Bani et al, *Modern Music of Torres Strait* (Canberra, 1981), p. 2.
- 7 G. White, *Round About the Torres Straits* (London, 1917), p. 41.
- 8 J. Douglas to J. Chalmers, Thursday Island, November 27, 1898. LMS Papua Letters, Council for World Mission Archives, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, London; microfilm in National Library of Australia (NLA) hereinafter PL.
- 9 S. Tomlinson, Diary, January 1, 1892, Mitchell Library, Sydney; see also W. MacGregor, Diary, June 13 and September 4, 1891, NLA. H. Mark to M. Stone-Wigg, New Guinea, nd, University of Papua New Guinea (hereinafter AA).
- 10 Lee Bryce to A. C. Haddon, Thursday Island, September 30, 1914, Haddon Papers, Cambridge University Library, envelope 24; Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound* (New York, 1968), pp. 94–5.
- 11 Gilbert White, *Thirty Years in Tropical Australia* (London, 1924), p. 214.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Carpentaria's staff included vicars of Thursday Island from 1890 and men ordained in the cathedral from 1900. Numbers compiled from J. Bayton, *Cross Over*, pp. 216–19.
- 15 David Wetherell, "The Bridegroom Cometh": The Lives and Deaths of Queensland Melanesians in New Guinea, 1893–1956, *Pacific Studies*, 12: 3 (July 1989), p. 53.
- 16 *Sunday Mercury* (Shrewsbury, Shropshire), June 23, 1968; David Wetherell (ed.), *The New Guinea Diaries of Philip Strong 1936–1945* (Melbourne, 1981), preface.
- 17 D. Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission* (Brisbane, 1977), p. 143.
- 18 M. Stone-Wigg, Diary, May 19, 1899, AA.

- 19 Edgar Meduedue, Address by Edgar Meduedue with Theodore Lodi's Story (Sydney, 1906); C. Cribb to R. W. Thompson, Cooktown, May 25, 1893, PL. For a discussion on length of service in four Papuan missions, see Diane Langmore, *Missionary Lives Papua, 1874–1914* (Honolulu, 1989), pp. 250–55.
- 20 W. J. A. Daniels to H. T. U. Jamieson, Clontarf, Queensland, June 25, 1977, Bishop's House Thursday Island Archives.
- 21 David Wetherell, 'Pioneers and Patriarchs: Samoans in a Nonconformist Mission District in Papua, 1890–1917', *Journal of Pacific History*, 15: 3 (July 1980), pp. 130–54.
- 22 Wetherell, "The Bridegroom Cometh", pp. 53–89.
- 23 Henry Newton, *In Far New Guinea* (London, 1914), p. 250.
- 24 *Argus* (Melbourne) December 10, 1923.
- 25 For a study of Holmes' attitudes, with a note on Brown, see R. E. Reid, 'John Henry Holmes in Papua', *Journal of Pacific History*, 13: 3–4 (1976), pp. 173–87.
- 26 G. White, *The Church and Modern Life* (Townsville, 1892), p. 11.
- 27 See, for example, New Guinea Mission English Committee, *Occasional Papers* (London 44/6 [1915], 53/15 [1916], 60/5 [1919]).
- 28 David Wetherell, *Charles Abel and the Kwato Mission 1891–1975* (Melbourne, 1996), pp. 59–60.
- 29 Bayton, *Cross Over*, pp. 126–8, 156–7.
- 30 Beckett and Bani, *Modern Music of Torres Strait*, p. 2.
- 31 W. H. MacFarlane to LMS Directors, Darnley Island, March 9, 1919, United Church Archives, University of Papua New Guinea.
- 32 S. McFarlane to W. Mullens, Murray Island, January 31, 1879, LMS Papua Reports, NLA.
- 33 Dave Passi, interview with E. E. Hawkey, transcribed by David Wetherell, Brisbane, December 1963.
- 34 W. H. MacFarlane, 'Amongst the Islands of the Torres Straits: Half a Century's Retrospect', *The East and the West* (London, January 1927), p. 37.
- 35 Occasional Papers 57/2 (1918).
- 36 G. Sharp to C. E. Herbert, Dogura, March 11, 1918, AA.
- 37 E. Jones, Florence Buchanan (London, 1921) contains a photograph of Buchanan with a blackboard containing these words.
- 38 TC (October 1930).
- 39 *Australian Board of Missions Review* (Sydney, June 1913).
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- 41 David Wetherell, 'The Bishop of Carpentaria and the Torres Strait Pearlers' Strike of 1936', *Journal of Pacific History*, 39: 2 (2004), pp. 190–8.
- 42 Robert A. Hall, *The Black Diggers* (Sydney, 1989), p. 39.
- 43 *Sunday Mercury* (Shrewsbury, Shropshire) June 23, 1968.
- 44 Kylie Tennant, *Speak You So Gently* (London, 1959), p. 81.
- 45 Ibid.
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- 50 F. W. Coaldrake, *Flood Tide in the Pacific* (Sydney, c.1964); see also ABM Board Minutes, Chairman's Report, May 3–5, 1966, p. 10; Bayton, *Cross Over*, p. 196.
- 51 Loos, 'From Church', p. 75.
- 52 Quoted in Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australians* (Sydney, 1994), pp. 108–9.
- 53 Loos, 'From Church' p. 81
- 54 Ibid, p. 84.
- 55 Eddie Mabo and other plaintiffs and the State of Queensland, defendant: Order I High Court of Australia, Canberra, F. C. 92, 014.
- 56 Dave Passi, interview with E. E. Hawkey, transcribed by David Wetherell, Brisbane, December 1963; Dave Passi, personal communication, May 1991.
- 57 *Age* (Melbourne) June 4, 1992.
- 58 David Hilliard, *God's Gentlemen: A History of the Melanesian Mission 1849–1942* (St. Lucia, 1978), p.294.

'Unto the Islands of the Sea'

The Erratic Beginnings of Mormon Missions in Polynesia, 1844–1900

Norman Douglas

Although the original appeal of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints lay in the conclusive answers it seemed to provide to contemporary religious and social questions in the United States, its ultimate strength lay in its vigorous missionary program. Just as the teachings of its founder, Joseph Smith, had dictated the structure of the church and the conduct of its members, so they dictated the nature of missionary activity and the direction this was to take. Mormon missionary work was characterised from the outset by its exceptional urgency; an urgency that resulted from the presence of a living prophet and a body of what purported to be recently revealed scripture, indigenous in origin and topical in content. On successive days, a Mormon convert might be baptised, confirmed, ordained and sent on a mission.

The unpaid, and for the greater part untrained, missionary effort was not merely an additional interest of the church, but an integral part of its organisation, and remained essential to the development of the church and the personal future of the ambitious church member. Within a decade of the founding of the Mormon Church in 1830, missions had begun not only in several

American states but in Canada and Great Britain. By the time of the death of Joseph Smith's main successor, Brigham Young, in 1877, missions had been started in more than 20 overseas countries, including French Oceania and Hawai'i;¹ although the Mormons broke no new ground, taking their message only to already Christian — preferably already Protestant — communities. The missions to Polynesia were later among the most successful of the church's enterprises and the Polynesian gradually would come to occupy a special place in Mormon thinking,² but for much of the early period of Mormon missionary activity in the islands there is little evidence either of consistent effort or policy, or of an especially favourable attitude to the Islanders. This chapter traces the progress of the missions in Polynesia from their inception until about 1900 and considers some of the implications.

The first Latter-Day Saints mission to Polynesia had about it the fortuitous quality that was to characterise much of their activity in the Pacific. Mormon missionary contact with Polynesians began in May 1844 on Tubuai in the Austral Group, where the ship carrying the missionaries to the Society Islands stopped to take on supplies. Neither the beginning on Tubuai nor the Society Islands as the missionaries' destination was intended originally. On May 23, 1843, at Nauvoo, Illinois, four men were 'set apart to a mission to the Sandwich Islands'.³ Evidently unable to find passage to their directed destination, the four, on the initiative of Addison Pratt, took passage instead on the whaler *Timoleon*, bound for the Society Islands. Only three, Pratt, Benjamin Grouard and Noah Rogers, survived the voyage.⁴

Seven months after its departure, the *Timoleon* put in at Tubuai. Pratt, who had some knowledge of Hawaiian, was able to conduct a rudimentary conversation with the Islanders who greeted the ship. Learning that Pratt and his companions were missionaries, and perhaps assuming that they were representatives of the same Protestant faith to which they had been already introduced, the

Tubuaians requested that at least one of them remain. Pratt, at first reluctant to leave his companions, soon acceded. The humility and reverence of a native missionary with whom he and Grouard stayed overnight convinced Pratt that to do otherwise would be 'running away from duty'.⁵ Pratt's decision provided him with a ready-made opening. Although the Tubuaians had had 20 years of contact with the teaching of the London Missionary Society,⁶ the experience was probably not profound enough to enable them to distinguish readily between LMS and Mormon teaching. By the end of July 1844, Pratt had baptised and confirmed four Tubuaians. He had also baptised, confirmed and conferred positions in the Mormon priesthood on six of the seven white men on the island. By February 1845, he could claim 57 baptisms on Tubuai. 'The Lord,' he wrote, 'has greatly blessed my feeble efforts to spread the gospel.'⁷

On Tahiti, Rogers and Grouard found their progress impeded by civil disturbance and their inability to communicate with the Tahitians. 'It placed us in a very critical situation indeed,' wrote Grouard, 'and had we means we should have kept on to the Sandwich Islands.'⁸ Five months' labour in Tahiti produced only five converts, all foreigners. Frustrated by the circumstances, Rogers left for Huahine. He could hardly have chosen a less favourable location, for the island was one of the strongest LMS stations in the South Seas, and was under the virtual control of one of the most powerful of the English missionaries, Charles Barff. On November 10, Rogers held a well-attended meeting on Huahine; a month and five meetings later, he had no audience at all.⁹

The next January, Rogers returned to Tahiti where he and Grouard discussed the prospect of returning to America, a consideration motivated by their lack of success, and the recent knowledge that the Mormon prophet had been murdered and the church at Nauvoo threatened with expulsion. They decided against immediate return. Instead, Grouard departed for Anaa in the Tuamotus,¹⁰ while Rogers visited, in turn, Moorea, Huahine, Manuae, Mangaia and Rurutu. Wherever he attempted to preach,

he found that the English missionaries had left instructions forbidding 'any white man to tarry' unless he carried a letter of introduction.¹¹ Less than one month after the conclusion of his abortive tour, Rogers returned to America.

On Anaa, Grouard was treated civilly, almost indulgently, by chiefs and people alike. Asked to state his country and the nature of his teaching, he replied that he was American and assured his questioners that his preaching was unlike that of the English missionaries, the 'pope (carholicks, or any thing els you have ever heard)'. The chiefs were apparently impressed. 'Americans,' said one, 'are good people; we know this because a great many of them have been here and they all treated us well.'¹² On May 4, 1845, Grouard preached on Anaa for the first time, taking as his text Mark 16:15-17. Three weeks later, he performed his first baptisms. By September, after a month's tour of the island, he claimed 620 members in five villages, including the 'king', several chiefs and one of the erstwhile LMS teachers. His brief labours had been fruitful; his mood was self-congratulatory:

It afforded me great pleasure and satisfaction to witness the great change which had taken place among these people since I had been among them ... I have baptized three generations, namely father son and grandson, who have together set down to ... feasts of human flesh, who are now faithfull [sic] members of the church of christ.¹³

So successful was Grouard that he began to feel the responsibility was too great for him, notwithstanding that he had ordained 17 office-holders in four months. He made his way to Tahiti and by letter persuaded Pratt to return with him to Anaa.¹⁴ There, encouraged by the claims of their native converts that they had taught themselves what they knew of Christianity, Grouard and Pratt settled into a steady round of preaching and baptising.¹⁵ During a tour of the north-eastern Tuamotus, Grouard baptised several dozen more.¹⁶

A week after Grouard's return to Anaa, Pratt and he decided that the former should return to America to report to the church authorities and request that more missionaries be sent to the islands. Pratt left Tahiti in March 1847 and returned in May 1850.¹⁷ Of Mormon affairs in the South Seas in the intervening three years almost nothing is known. The only extant journal of Benjamin Grouard's ends abruptly in 1846, but such sparse sources as have survived suggest that in the interim Grouard spent at least as much time in trading activities as in missionary work, and that missionary duties, especially in the Tuamotus, were conducted in part by one John Hawkins, an English trader who was an early convert.¹⁸

Pratt returned with James Brown, a young ex-member of the Mormon Battalion in the United States' war with Mexico. They were followed six months later by a group of 21, including Pratt's wife and young family and seven proselytising missionaries, four of whom brought wives and children.¹⁹ The events of the next two years suggest that their efforts might as well have been spared. Within seven months of their arrival, three of the missionaries had returned to America. Pratt wrote scornfully:

It seems to me foolishness that Elders should come so far and then turn round and go back, because they had not got Ann to cook for them ... It wants healthy, ambitious men, to stand the hardships of these Islands, young men who are neither sugar nor salt, as they are sometimes exposed to the wet.²⁰

In April 1851, another missionary arrived unauthorised from Hawai'i and, within a few days of his arrival, began to take such 'unbecoming liberties with the native females' that he was disfellowshipped and advised to return to Salt Lake City.²¹ Of those who remained, three were all but ineffectual: one was in the islands for more than a year before he 'preached for the first time in the native tongue';²² a fourth saw some service in the Tuamotus and

was later castaway on Tongareva (Penrhyn Island) where, according to an English missionary, he had been 'regularly starved out being glad to make his escape in a Shelling vessel'.²³ Pratt's earlier companion, Grouard, was now taking less part in active missionising and more in trading. Indeed, he was showing signs of restlessness and disillusionment. On one occasion he had written to Brigham Young, threatening that 'unless he received assistance he would not only leave the mission but also the church';²⁴ on another he declared his intention of seeking his fortune on the Californian goldfields.²⁵

Apart from Pratt, therefore, there was only one potentially useful missionary, James Brown. But Brown's military experience proved to be a mixed blessing. He was vigorous, forceful and used to a rugged life. But he was also blunt and tactless to the point of stupidity. Lacking any education except in the techniques of the frontier, Brown also lacked even the most rudimentary diplomacy. He was obliged to leave Tahiti after an encounter with English missionaries. Within a few days of his arrival on Anaa, he offended two Catholic priests and two months later was arrested on charges of inciting rebellion and attempting to subvert the laws of the French Protectorate.²⁶ On Raivavae, where he was advised by his colleagues to remain, he was threatened with physical violence and expulsion by the Islanders;²⁷ and on Rapa he affronted Islanders by an adamant refusal to observe custom when eating.²⁸

While Brown was on Raivavae, his brethren were making plans to abandon the mission and return to America. Pratt's family on Tubuai was becoming dissatisfied and anxious to leave. On Tubuai and Anaa many of the native converts had grown weary of the social restrictions imposed by Mormonism and reverted to their previous habits. Of the white converts made on the islands, many had left, while others had tired of the novelty of their new faith and the responsibilities of their new offices. Brown's behaviour and subsequent expulsion from the islands of the Protectorate had

thrown suspicion on the rest of the missionaries, who now had to contend with Catholic opposition in addition to Protestant. Observed Pratt: 'everything seemed to be working against the prosperity of the mission.'²⁹ On May 16, 1852 Pratt and his family, Grouard, his Tuamotuan wife and four children and a teenage boy, who had accompanied the Pratts, left Tahiti. Grouard had sold his interest in the trading-cum-mission boat to raise money for their passages.³⁰ Over the next few months the others followed.³¹ By the end of 1852, the first phase of Mormon missionary work in the South Seas was over.

Such success as the missionaries enjoyed during this period was almost certainly due to the apparent interest they took in their potential converts rather than the innovative nature of their teaching. Although the concept of a living prophet and an American-based sacred text might have appeared novel to the Islanders, there is little evidence that these aspects of the religion were strongly emphasised at this early stage. The *Book of Mormon*, first published in 1830 and presumably referred to, if not necessarily read or displayed by the early missionaries, is relatively conservative in its theology. The greater mysteries of Mormonism, including an anthropomorphic deity, the plurality of gods and wives, the three-tiered structure of heaven, the solemnising of marriages and the practice of vicarious baptism, were revealed in other works published later and widely circulated later still.³² In September 1845, E. W. Krause and George Platt of the LMS reported that the Mormons were teaching 'all from our books'.³³

Similarly, the notion that the Polynesian was brother to the American Indian and hence divinely favoured, often claimed by the Mormons to be of profound and fundamental motivational and doctrinal significance in their dealing with Pacific Islanders,³⁴ does not seem to have received much of an airing in these early years. Unlike many other Mormon beliefs, which apparently emerged full-blown from the imagination of Joseph Smith, this one appears

to have evolved over many years after Smith's death, and began to acquire something resembling its present form only in 1868.³⁵ Although there are scattered references in the early period to Islanders being 'of the House of Israel', there is also strong evidence from their experiences in Hawai'i, New Zealand and elsewhere that the Mormons came to accept the necessity of taking their message to the Polynesians only after most whites had proved impervious to it. Indeed, Addison Pratt, encountering New Zealand in 1844 aboard the *Timoleon*, had observed that it represented 'a great and delightful field for our Elders to occupy: some hundred thousands of English emigrants to preach to'. Because of this he had contemplated leaving the ship there 'to commence our mission'.³⁶ In the early stages, at least, Pratt seemed reluctant to delegate responsibility to Islanders, conferring priesthood positions on white converts.³⁷

While the Mormons were abandoning French Oceania as a mission field, Mormon missionaries were making gains in the Hawaiian Islands. Although Mormon contact with Hawai'i had occurred as early as 1846, this venture cannot be regarded as essentially a missionary enterprise.³⁸ However, on December 12, 1850, a group of 10 missionaries arrived in Honolulu from the goldfields of California, where they had been sent to raise money for their passages. The next day they drew lots for choice of partner and island, two intending to go to each of the major islands of the group but, for reasons not entirely clear, the decision to establish a station on Molokai was revoked almost immediately.³⁹

On Maui, George Q. Cannon, the most articulate and able of the missionaries, began by preaching to the white residents at Lahaina. When he first arrived in Honolulu, Cannon had thought the native Hawaiians 'a strange people' and doubted that he would ever 'learn their language, or become ... familiar with their customs', even if it were necessary to do so. On Maui, he was obliged to make a more practical appraisal of the situation, and

became satisfied 'that if we confined our labors to the whites, our mission to the islands would be a short one'. His colleagues on the other islands were less easily convinced of the wisdom of the alternative. Wrote Cannon: 'It was a point upon which a difference of opinion arose, some of the Elders being of the opinion that our mission was to the whites, and that when we had warned them we were at liberty to return.'⁴⁰ By the end of March 1851, five had left the islands, one pleading that, as he was an old bachelor, his time would be more appropriately spent searching for a wife.⁴¹

With only five missionaries left in the field, Maui became temporarily the centre of Mormon activity in the Hawaiian Islands. By chance, three of the five who chose to remain were located there; soon they were joined by another from Kauai. Later the fifth also saw service on Maui. Much of their success came as a result of Cannon's energy and initiative. He quickly acquired some facility in the language and began translating the *Book of Mormon* into Hawaiian in January 1851.⁴² He also undertook solo excursions to various parts of the island, preaching and baptising. By the time more missionaries arrived from America in August 1851, those on Maui were claiming 196 converts out of a total in the Hawaiian Islands of 220. By July 1855, 25 Mormon missionaries were serving in the Hawaiian kingdom and a membership of 4,220 was claimed, with branches of the church on all the main islands.⁴³

The missionaries' progress in the early stages was aided by a tolerant Hawaiian government and a sympathetic US Consul, who took an active part in assuring that the Mormons were granted the same rights as those enjoyed by other denominations. The opposition of other mission churches also tended to be less severe than in French Oceania, though not surprisingly, it existed. But despite Cannon's complaints that Catholics and Protestants alike were zealously engaged in endeavouring to retard the progress of truth,⁴⁴ he himself was given the opportunity to use 'Presbyterian' meeting houses on Maui, an opportunity he seized to denounce the teachings of the

incumbent minister.⁴⁵ The Mormons' activities could hardly go unobserved, but opposition often consisted mainly of criticism of the missionaries' poor educational qualifications. 'The principle cry in these lands,' wrote John R. Young to his father, 'is that the Mormons are ignorant ... The cry is, "They have never been to high schools, nor to colleges, and therefore they are not fit to preach the Gospel".' Young did not bother to refute the criticism, preferring instead to liken the Mormon missionaries to the apostles of the primitive Christian Church, an oblique admission that the charge had some validity.⁴⁶ Notwithstanding their own educational shortcomings, the Mormons established schools in their key centres, demanding for them the same recognition awarded to other mission schools. Their demands were frustrated by the Kingdom's Minister for Public Instruction, Richard Armstrong, on whose decision schools were organised after 1853 on a territorial rather than sectarian basis.⁴⁷

The most significant early development was the establishment of a Mormon colony on Lanai, a 'gathering place' where Hawaiian saints would labour for the greater glory of God and the prosperity of the mission. The doctrine of 'gathering' was preached by all Mormon missionaries, whether in Scandinavia or the South Seas, and was intended to mean the gathering of the converted to Zion in America. In Polynesia, this concept underwent some modification. Missionaries made frequent attempts to encourage their charges to gather to Zion, and were persistent in their suggestions and requests to church authorities. Should a mass gathering to the Salt Lake Valley be considered inappropriate, San Bernardino in Southern California was regarded as an alternative. 'I am of the opinion,' wrote Reddin Allred, 'that one hundred of them at that place would be of more service to themselves and the kingdom of God than one thousand on these islands.'⁴⁸ Earlier, Henry Bigler, one of the original group on Maui, had inquired: 'Do you think these Saints will ever be gathered to California or in the Valley of the Mountains? or will they gather on these Islands, and

have Temples built &c.⁴⁹ The reply to Bigler's query — from apostle George A. Smith — hinted strongly that the Mormon leaders were not over-anxious to promote a large-scale immigration of Polynesians: 'The Saints will gather to the Continent when opportunity presents — but there is no particular haste, from the Sandwich Islands till the work is fully established.'⁵⁰

Even if church leaders had shown more enthusiasm, the problem of getting large numbers of Hawaiian saints to America would have been insurmountable, since the gathering was not financially sponsored by the church, merely advocated, and most Hawaiian Mormons lived at subsistence level. 'Some of them [the Hawaiians] are wealthy,' Bigler had observed. '[But] those that have obeyed the Gospel are mostly poor and of the lower class.'⁵¹ Moreover, emigration was restricted by an act of 1850, which prohibited Hawaiians from leaving the kingdom except for certain specified reasons.⁵² Various factors, therefore, made the prospect of gathering to Zion impracticable. The alternative was to gather in Hawai'i, and perhaps prepare for the day when the emigration laws would be lifted and the church in America would make its welcome less ambiguous.

Accordingly, a committee of missionaries began to seek out possible locations. Late in 1853, mission president Philip Lewis, after visiting Lanai, wrote to the church authorities that he had 'never seen a place better calculated for the colonization of the saints than this'.⁵³ The particular spot that appealed so much to Lewis was the Palawai Valley. Within a short time, a lease had been taken out and plans were drawn for a town (the 'City of Joseph'), which included a school 'to teach the natives the English language, and also to teach them how to till the earth'.⁵⁴ Crops were planted, and saints, livestock and implements transported from other islands. Within a year, 100 had responded to the call to gather.⁵⁵

But the greater number of these were from Lanai anyway, and it became obvious within a few years that however anxious

many Hawaiian saints might have been to emigrate to America, they regarded Lanai as a poor substitute and intensive farming as an unpleasant occupation. Elder Ephraim Green, who spent one year in the City of Joseph, chiefly in the capacity of overseer of agriculture, frequently despaired of teaching the colonists the Mormon virtues of industry and diligence. 'I have a time tring to lurn them to work and live more like civilized being ... I have not bin able to make twnety of them due work more than while man [d]ue in a day this is slo giting along [sic].'⁵⁶ Three months later, he was having no better luck: 'there is many of them that would go half starved and naked before they can be prevaild upon to work . . . if they cant ackomplish thare object to day thay think thay will tomorrow if not to morrow sum uther time is just as well [sic].'⁵⁷

By October 1857, it was evident that Lanai was not the success that had been hoped for. The mission then had a reported total of 3,325 members, but the number of saints at the gathering place was only 139. It had never been more than 160. At the October mission conference it was decided that 'one or more other places' on other islands should be selected.⁵⁸ But there was barely time to make the decision operable, for, by the spring of 1858, all the American missionaries had been recalled to Utah, to lend support to the home church in its confrontation with US Government troops.

By the end of 1858, there were no Mormon missionaries working among Polynesians. Mormon missionaries had entered New Zealand from Australia in 1854 but made no attempt to proselytise Maori until 1881, by which time it was finally realised that a mission to whites was proving fruitless.⁵⁹ In 1868, an article in the widely read *Juvenile Instructor* had associated 'New Zealanders' with the 'darker races' of the Pacific, such as the 'Negroes of New Guinea', rather than with the rest of the Polynesian family, helping to further confuse the Mormons' view of Islanders and how they should approach them.⁶⁰ In the islands of

Hawai'i and French Oceania white converts had been very few; those willing to accept the responsibilities of supervision fewer still. Polynesians had been appointed to church offices ranging from deacon to elder, but the extent to which they actively promoted the faith is conjectural, since no records of the native church are extant. It seems certain, however, that lacking the constant supervision of an American missionary, many Islanders returned to their former faith or succumbed to the advances of a new one.

On Anaa, the dual encroachment of French administration and French Catholic priests resulted, in 1852, in a minor rebellion in which a gendarme was killed and two priests severely beaten and, later, in the island's almost complete acceptance of Catholicism. By 1871, Father Germain Fierens could write: 'Here on Ana, mormonism is going; it is no longer in any but some old hardened homes in which it is close to death.'⁶¹ In 1857, Alexander Chisholm of the LMS commented similarly on the Tubuaians.⁶² However, in other parts of the protectorate, especially in the outer Tuamotus, Mormon Islanders posed problems for the spread of Catholicism. The peripatetic Father Albert Montiton of the Society of Picpus found the threat to the Catholic mission in the eastern Tuamotus to come not from the Islanders' possible reversion to anarchy, 'acts of cruelty ... or savagery but from a more certain and less remote danger' — Mormonism.⁶³

The degree of familiarity with Mormon doctrine that Polynesian defenders of the faith had obtained from the teachings of the American missionaries by this time is debatable. Certainly, it was not profound enough to enable them to oppose the claims of Walter Murray Gibson in Hawai'i or the Reorganised Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Tahiti. Gibson, a remarkable rogue with a background of seafaring, sedition, imprisonment and confidence trickery, and aspirations of empire building, succeeded in ingratiating himself with Brigham Young in 1860. He persuaded the Mormon leader that he had absorbed Mormonism and believed

it sufficiently to be ordained and sent on a mission. Subsequently, he was given an appointment almost as extraordinary as his own career, to the 'Chinese, Japanese, East Indians and Malasian [sic] Islands'. Armed with this, together with elaborately worded letters of recommendation and his priesthood certificate, Gibson departed the Salt Lake Valley in December 1860.⁶⁴

He came no closer to his appointed destination than the Hawaiian Islands, sojourning briefly in Honolulu and then on Maui where he spent some time, choosing to keep his association with Mormonism to himself. It is doubtful if Gibson knew much about the Mormons in Hawai'i before he landed, but by November 1861 he was settled in Lanai's Palawai Valley, having introduced himself to the colonists as 'Priest of Melchisedek and Chief President of the Islands of the Sea'. On Lanai, Gibson's dreams of empire were necessarily moderated. Soon after his arrival there, he confided to his diary: 'The people are poor; in pocket, in brain, in everything ... They are not material for a Caesar, nor a cotton Lord, nor a railroad contractor ... and surely will seem but small material for me, after all the hope and grasp of my heart.'⁶⁵ But he was nothing if not imaginative and optimistic. He hoped to influence the Hawaiian Government to let him have the entire valley and most of the island to develop and considered an irrigation scheme for the valley. 'I could make it fit,' he wrote, 'for the revisit of Christ.'⁶⁶

Gibson controlled the affairs of the City of Joseph for two and a half years. During this time he displayed a flair for labour organisation characteristic of a Southern planter and a talent for simony reminiscent of a medieval pope, occasionally using Hawaiians as plough-horses and selling church offices.⁶⁷ In the meantime, he was steadily buying, allegedly on behalf of the church, but actually in his own name, much of the island's land. In May 1864, four Mormon elders arrived from Utah in response to complaints addressed to Brigham Young by disgruntled members of Gibson's

congregation. Gibson was promptly excommunicated and withdrew from the Mormon cause, taking with him title to almost half the island.⁶⁸

With the removal of Gibson and the re-establishment of regular missionary work, the Mormon mission in Hawai'i entered a period of development that requires separate and detailed study, so different is it from Latter-Day Saints activity elsewhere in Polynesia. A new and ultimately more successful gathering place was established at Laie on Oahu, with the purchase in 1865 of a plantation of 2,500 hectares.⁶⁹ To a great extent thereafter, the history of Laie is that of the mission. After an initial period of trial, during which Hawaiian colonists were assured that their right to gather and labour for Zion did not include any rights to the land itself,⁷⁰ the Laie plantation became an extremely successful commercial investment for the church.

Understandably, Mormon writers have been hostile to Walter Murray Gibson, yet unwittingly he influenced the direction of Mormon missions in Polynesia. Had it not been for the need to investigate his activities on Lanai, it is extremely unlikely that Mormon missionaries would have re-entered Hawai'i when they did, for there is no indication from church sources that the reopening of the mission was being considered at that stage. Gibson was also responsible for introducing Mormonism into Samoa, although his reason for sending two Hawaiian Mormons there in December 1862 was undoubtedly less to extend the cause of Mormonism than to further his own plans for an 'Oceanic Empire'. Gibson's agents, Kimo Belio and Samuela Manoa, reached Aunuu, off eastern Tutuila, in January 1863, and during the next eight years they performed baptisms on that island, on Tutuila and on Upolu. By 1871, they claimed to have raised up churches and gained more than 200 church members. This was an impressive enough beginning, considering that much of their Mormonism had been learned from Gibson.⁷¹

Although the activities of the Hawaiian missionaries came to the church's notice in 1871, no move was made to consolidate or extend Mormon gains in Samoa by sending an American missionary there until 17 years later. By this time, Belio was dead, Manoa had suffered an injury while fishing and retired from active missionary work, and their converts had returned to previous affiliations.⁷² On June 20, 1888, the piecemeal introduction of American missionaries began with the arrival of Joseph Dean, his wife and infant child. Dean had already seen service in Hawai'i, had some knowledge of that language and was energetic and ambitious. The fourth day after landing he held his first meeting on Aunuu, assisted by Manoa, who had been brought out of retirement by Dean's arrival; on the fifth, he baptised his first convert. 'I am satisfied,' he wrote a few hours later, 'that this nation is fully ripe for the Gospel.'⁷³

Regular conversions on Tutuila and Upolu increased Dean's already firm confidence in the mission's future. In September 1889, he wrote to the church's First Presidency: 'We have more invitations from Chiefs and Villages to come and hold meetings than we can fulfil ... when we get a force of missionaries that can teach them they will flock to the fold like sheep.'⁷⁴ In June 1889, Dean made the first of a series of abortive attempts to introduce Mormonism into the LMS-dominated Manu'a Islands. The next year, he was considerably more successful in extending the mission to Savai'i, the largest of the Samoa Group, where small branches were established at Palauli and later at Saleaula.

Dean's original appointment had been wide: to the 'Sandwich, Navigator and Society Islands'. The inclusion of the latter within the mission's orbit might have been a belated acknowledgment of early Mormon successes in a field that had been ignored by the missionaries for 40 years and all but forgotten by the church. It was brought to the attention of the church authorities in 1886 by one of the early missionaries, James Brown,

in a characteristically exaggerated account, and drew from apostle F. D. Richards the observation: 'It is quite a singular affair that a branch of the Church, numbering 3,000 members, should be left unobserved and uncared for.'⁷⁵ Yet when Dean reminded the church leaders of his extensive appointment and requested more specific instructions concerning the Society Islands, he received only a vague reply advising him to follow his 'own judgement and the promptings of the Spirit'.⁷⁶ His judgment led him to spend the remainder of his term in Samoa. It was left to his successor, William Lee, apparently on his own initiative, to renew operations in French Oceania, and also to extend them to Tonga, which hitherto had not been considered as a mission field by the Mormons.

In July 1891, the first two Mormon missionaries to Tonga arrived at Nuku'alofa on Tongatapu. In the next six years, missionaries were appointed regularly to Tonga and visited most parts of the kingdom and even the nearby French possessions of 'Uvea and Futuna. By 1897, 19, including two missionary wives, had served in the Kingdom of Tonga. Their efforts during this time were attended by a notable lack of success. In April 1897, the last two missionaries left the kingdom and returned to Samoa claiming that the Tongans were 'not yet ready to receive the Gospel', although they had done 'all in their power ... to establish the cause of truth in that as yet unfaithful branch of the house of Israel'.⁷⁷ In six years, only 16 Tongans had been baptised; three on Tongatapu, two of whom soon apostatised, and 13 on Ha'apai.

To some extent the failure of the mission was due to the fast turnover of missionaries, their lack of direction and their inability to learn the language. But to a greater extent it was due to the fact that the mission was ill-timed. In 1891, Tonga was still enmeshed in the political and religious upheaval that marked the closing years of the first Tupou's reign. Although the missionaries had been granted permission to preach by Tupou I and his successor, most Tongans owed their political fealty to the king and their religious

loyalty to the king's church. Even had the missionaries spoken their message with more ability and conviction, few Tongans would have been anxious to listen. It is perhaps significant that of the few conversions most were in the scattered Ha'apai Group, more than 160 kilometres from the seat of Tongan government. A decade was to elapse before Mormon missionaries were again sent to Tonga, but it was not until 1916 that the Tongan mission was considered sufficiently strong to be separated from its parent mission in Samoa.

In January 1892, six months after the first Mormon missionaries had entered Tonga, two were dispatched to Tahiti, having been given two months in Samoa to prepare for the mission with a study of Tahitian. The two, Joseph Damron and William Seegmiller, were little prepared when they arrived; it was October before Seegmiller 'said a few words for the first time in the native tongue'.⁷⁸ But they were less prepared for what they found, for most of Tahiti's Mormons had become members of the Reorganised Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, after a brief visit by two missionaries of that church in 1873. One of several factions that had formed after the death of Joseph Smith in 1844, the Reorganised Church grouped around Joseph Smith III, a son of the founder, and located its headquarters in Independence, Missouri. It rejected the leadership of the founder's leading apostle, Brigham Young, and the appellation 'Mormon', reverting to an earlier form of the term 'Latter Day'. It rejected also the doctrines of polytheism and plural marriage, claiming that these were aberrations of Brigham Young, although there seems little doubt that they were part of the founder's later teachings.⁷⁹

Like the first Mormon mission to the South Pacific, the Reorganised Church's mission was a chance affair. The two missionaries were on their way to Australia when the ship carrying them made an unscheduled stop at Tahiti to make repairs. On inquiry, they learned of a Mormon settlement at Tiona (Zion) eight

kilometres west of Papeete, and hastened there, stressing to the Tahitian Mormons the providential nature of their visit.⁸⁰ Reconversions amounting to many hundreds took place in the next 13 years. By April 1886, Thomas W. Smith, mission president and an apostle of the Reorganised Church, could report 1,300 members — termed *Tanito* (Saint) — in that church's Society Islands mission, the greater part of which had been won from Mormonism.⁸¹ Thus, when Mormon missionaries returned in 1892, they had good cause to regret their neglect of French Oceania as a mission field. To further the claim that they represented the original LDS movement, the Mormons re-enlisted the assistance of James Brown, by this time an old man and a semi-cripple.⁸² With Brown's help, several aberrant Mormons were retrieved from the Reorganised Church, but much subsequent LDS activity in French Oceania was characterised by rivalry and antagonism between Mormon and *Tanito* and by French officialdom's suspicion of both factions.

Tahiti provided a jumping-off place for a number of attempts to introduce Mormonism into the furthest flung islands of French Oceania — the Marquesas and the Gambiers — and also into the Cook Islands. All were futile. Three missionaries served in the Cooks between 1899 and 1901; five in the Marquesas between 1899 and 1904, and at least two in the Gambiers between 1902 and 1904. The years of labour failed to produce a single convert on any of these groups.⁸³ Nor, at least at this stage, were Mormon missionaries any more successful in the Leeward Group of the Society Islands. Early in 1901, on the eve of his departure from Aitutaki in the Cooks, elder Mervyn Davis expressed himself despondently in terms that might well have been echoed by several of his colleagues. 'The natives,' he wrote, 'show little interest and avoid Gospel subjects.'⁸⁴

By the early 1900s, then, the only Polynesian group of any significance that had not been visited by Latter-Day Saints missionaries was the Ellice Islands (now Tuvalu). Yet, despite their

wide geographical spread, the expansion of LDS missions in Polynesia was sporadic, in some cases accidental, while for several decades in the second half of the 19th century, Latter-Day Saints virtually ignored the greater part of the area, including their first Pacific mission field. These are facts that sit curiously in the light of the church's universal aims, the size of its potential missionary force, and the often repeated claim that the Polynesians were an especially favoured people in the LDS scheme of things. We have seen also that Mormon missionaries in the region assumed initially that their message was intended for whites. When these matters are taken into account, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, despite their later rationalisations, for much of the late 19th century, the greater part of Polynesia and the Polynesians were quite peripheral to the Mormon missionary effort.

Footnotes

- 1 The history of Mormon missions in the Pacific Islands is examined in Norman Douglas, 'Latter-day Saints Missions and Missionaries in Polynesia 1844–1960', Unpublished PhD thesis, The Australian National University (Canberra, 1975).
- 2 See Norman Douglas, 'The Sons of Lehi and the Seed of Cain: Racial Myths in Mormon Scripture and their Relevance to the Pacific Islands', *Journal of Religious History*, 8: 1 (1974), pp. 90–104. Mormon writing on this subject reaches its fullest expression in Willam A. Cole and Elwin W. Jensen, *Israel in the Pacific* (Salt Lake City, 1961), and its reductio ad absurdum in Mark E. Peterson, *Polynesians Came From America!* (Salt Lake City, 1962).
- 3 Addison Pratt papers, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City. Hereafter cited as CHO.
- 4 Addison Pratt, Journal, CHO.
- 5 Ibid. See Niel Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas 1797–1860* (Melbourne, 1978).
- 7 *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo, Illinois, November 1, 1845).
- 8 Benjamin Grouard, Journal, May 14, 1844, CHO.
- 9 Noah Rogers, Journal, CHO.
- 10 Grouard, Journal, February 9, 1845.
- 11 Rogers, Journal.
- 12 Grouard, Journal.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Pratt, Journal.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Grouard, Journal.
- 17 Pratt, Journal.
- 18 Society Islands Mission Manuscript History, CHO. Information (probably oral) was obtained by church chronicler Andrew Jensen during his visit to the islands in 1896. See also F. Edward Butterworth, *The Adventures of John Hawkins: Restoration Pioneer* (Independence, 1963). This is an almost wholly fictionalised account.
- 19 Pratt, Journal.
20. *Millennial Star* (Liverpool, May 15, 1851).
- 21 Pratt, Journal. Caroline Crosby, Journal, CHO.
- 22 Crosby, Journal, November 2, 1851.
- 23 Aaron Buzacott to LMS, February 9, 1858. LMS South Seas Letters, Microfilm, National Library of Australia, Canberra.
- 24 Nettie Hunt Rencher, 'The First Pacific Island Missionary', Pratt papers, CHO.
- 25 Pratt, Journal.

- 26 James Brown, *Giant of the Lord: Life of a Pioneer* (Salt Lake City, 1960), pp. 238–45.
- 27 *Ibid.*, pp. 259–65.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 272.
- 29 Pratt, Journal.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 Brown, *Giant of the Lord*, p. 283.
- 32 See *Doctrine and Covenants* (various), and R. Russell, *Pearl of Great Price* (London, 1965).
- 33 E. W. Krause and George Platt to LMS, September 29, 1845, LMS South Seas Letters, Microfilm, National Library of Australia, Canberra; See Douglas, 'Latter-day Saints Missions', pp. 215–17
- 34 See Douglas, 'The Sons of Lehi ...', pp. 94–100.
- 35 *Ibid.*, pp. 98–9.
- 36 *Times and Seasons* (November 15, 1844).
- 37 Pratt, Journal.
- 38 Comfort Margaret Bock, 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Hawaiian Islands', Unpublished MA thesis, University of Hawai'i (Honolulu, 1941), p. 3.
- 39 George Q. Cannon, 'My First Mission', Preston Nibley (comp.), *Three Mormon Classics* (Salt Lake City, 1944), pp. 128–30.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 133.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 188.
- 43 Hawaiian Mission Manuscript History, July 1855, CHO. The membership figure is difficult to accept. It might be a misprint in the above history. The last three digits are the same as the previous figure.
- 44 *Desert News* (Salt Lake City, July 24, 1852).
- 45 Cannon, 'My First Mission', pp. 155–6.
- 46 *Desert News* (July 11, 1855).
- 47 R. S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, 1778–1854: Foundation and Transformation* (Honolulu, 1947), p. 359.
- 48 *Desert News* (27 April 1854).
- 49 *Ibid.* (April 2, 1853).
- 50 *Ibid.*
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, p. 329.
- 53 *Desert News* (March 30, 1854).
- 54 *Ibid.* (November 14, 1855).
- 55 Hawaiian Mission Manuscript History, October 1856.
- 56 Ephraim Green, Journal, CHO, January 27, 1855.

- 57 Ibid., April 6, 1855.
- 58 Hawaiian Mission Manuscript History, October 1857.
- 59 See Ian R. Barker, 'The Connexion: the Mormon Church and the Maori People', Unpublished MA thesis, Victoria University (Wellington 1967), for a history of the NZ mission. Unfortunately, the work suffers from an almost complete reliance on published sources.
- 60 *Juvenile Instructor*, 3: 19 (Salt Lake City), October 1, 1868. See also Douglas, 'The Sons of Lehi ...', pp. 99–100.
- 61 *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, 44 (1872), p. 124.
- 62 Richard Lovett, *History of the London Missionary Society: 1795–1895* (London 1899), p. 347.
- 63 *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, 45 (1873), p. 384.
- 64 Brigham Young papers, CHO, November 1860. Typescript copies of Gibson's appointment courtesy of Don Moorman, Ogden, Utah.
- 65 Walter Murray Gibson, Journal, CHO, November 5, 1861.
- 66 Ibid., January 12, 1862.
- 67 *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Honolulu, (March 20, April 3, 1862); Eliza Roxey Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City, 1874), p. 272.
- 68 Ibid., pp. 281–7.
- 69 Hawaiian Mission Manuscript History, October 1865.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 *Desert News* (April 15, 1871).
- 72 Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, 1941), p. 765.
- 73 Samoan Mission Historical Record 1888-1903, June 25, 1888, CHO.
- 74 Dean to First Presidency, September 8, 1889, Dean Papers, CHO.
- 75 Richards to John Taylor, January 26, 1887, Tahitian Mission Letters, CHO.
- 76 Dean to First Presidency, November 27, 1889, Dean Papers.
- 77 Samoan Mission Historical Record 1888-1903, April 21, 1897.
- 78 William Seegmiller, Journal, CHO.
- 79 See Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet* (London, 1963), pp. 399–400. See also Aleah G. Koury, *The Truth and the Evidence ...* (Independence, 1965), *passim*.
- 80 *True Latter Day Saints Herald* (Independence, April 15, 1874).
- 81 Reports of the Annual Conferences of the Reorganised Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, April 1886, Reorganised Church Office, Independence.
- 82 Brown, *Giant of the Lord*, pp. 496-7.
- 83 Tahitian Mission Manuscript History, CHO.
- 84 Mervyn Davis, report January-April 1901, Tahitian Mission Letters, CHO.

The Bahá'í Faith in the Pacific

Graham Hassall

The spread of Bahá'í communities throughout the Pacific Islands might be too recent a phenomenon to yet warrant close historical consideration. Several factors combine, nonetheless, to suggest the usefulness of an initial survey of the Bahá'í contribution to contemporary Pacific religious history. Passing references to Bahá'í activities have appeared in secondary literature, with little supporting detail. Furthermore, these have in some cases suffered from errors of fact and interpretation that signal the need for a more substantial account. A more compelling motivation, beyond matters of historiography, lies in the usefulness for comparative purposes of the observation of a philosophy and practice of religion that combines some motivations shared with traditional Judeo-Christian systems of belief, with approaches to religious teaching and practice (and their expression in propagation and organisation) that originate outside Western traditions. Whether as mission history, as social history, or as a study in comparative religion, a survey of the emergence and consolidation of Bahá'í centres thus implies observance and recognition of alternative paradigms of action and belief in a manner that sheds light on other facets of these contemporary Pacific societies. Even though the admitted infancy of Pacific Bahá'í communities

challenges the possibility of adequate historical construction, and no matter that the sources are uneven and uncollected, and patterns of community and individual action are as yet incomplete and underdeveloped, the attempt is made in this chapter to identify the patterns of establishment of Bahá'í communities in the Pacific.¹

The spread of the Bahá'í movement from the East to the Pacific was more direct than might be imagined. The prophet-founder of the Faith, Bahá'u'lláh (Mirza Husayn Ali, 1817–92), born in Persia and subsequently exiled to the extremities of the Ottoman Empire at the urging of first Persian and then Turkish religious authorities, had proclaimed a worldwide mandate for his teachings. He died in Palestine in 1892. But the pivotal doctrine of the 'oneness of humanity' that lay at the centre of his pronouncements and writings required of his followers an imparting of his faith to all corners of the globe.

Another central Bahá'í belief, and one having particular relevance to the study of Bahá'í approaches to Pacific religions, is the 'progressive revelation' of religion to humanity from a common divine source, through a series of messengers. By this belief, Bahá'ís profess their recognition not only of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and Hinduism (to refer to the religious traditions whose originators are well known), but recognition of the existence of other prophets in the past, whose personality and detailed teachings are no longer known. The acceptance of a multiplicity of religious teachers in the gradual unfolding of the world's spiritual destiny allowed the Bahá'ís to admit the possibility of the divine origins of primal religions, and of other beliefs based on 'custom'. This acceptance in turn informed the Bahá'í approach to Pacific belief systems with an underlying sympathy that did not require a detailed knowledge of their specifics. It also removed from the Bahá'í position the possibility of fundamental hostility toward other religions, whether Western or non-Western.

The first Bahá'ís to travel to foreign lands to spread their faith regarded themselves as emissaries rather than missionaries: they did not travel under the instruction or subsidy of a mission board, and because support was moral rather than financial, their number was limited to the few who enjoyed some form of financial independence. The first Bahá'ís to teach in the Pacific included Agnes Alexander (Hawai'i), Clara and Hyde Dunn (Australia and New Zealand), Nora Lee (Fiji), Mariette Bolton (New Caledonia) and John and Louise Bosch (Tahiti). There were also occasional travellers such as Loulie Matthews, who deposited Bahá'í tracts in public libraries across the Pacific in the course of a world cruise.

In 1953, seven of the 12 Bahá'í national communities then existing in diverse parts of the world were allocated tasks within the Pacific. Fifteen 'virgin' territories (ie, areas where there were no Bahá'ís) were allocated among these seven 'sending' communities: the US was to open the Caroline Islands and Tonga; India, Pakistan and Burma were to open the Mariana Islands; Persia was to open the Solomon Islands; Canada was to open the Marquesas and Samoa; South America was to open the Cook Islands; Central America was to open Gilbert and Ellice Islands, Marshall Islands and the Tuamotu Archipelago; and Australia and New Zealand were to open the Admiralty Islands, Loyalty Islands, New Hebrides and Society Islands.²

Propagation of Bahá'í beliefs and values proceeded in at least four phases. The first required successful settlement of 'pioneers' in each of the Pacific Island groups. This was followed by a period of contacts with individuals, which occasionally resulted in conversions. A third phase witnessed group conversions, generally within family groups, or clan structures. Finally, when the numbers of Bahá'ís reached significant levels administrative bodies were established.

Between October 1953 and October 1955, some 23 Bahá'ís entered the virgin territories and a further six entered consolidation

territories where Bahá'ís had previously or still existed. Pioneers were not clerics and had no ascribed status. They had not undergone special training — whether theological or practical — and did not necessarily feel they had been 'called' to their work.³ They mostly possessed middle-class backgrounds, were either retired and subsisting on accumulated funds, or else were able to adapt themselves to the environment in which they found themselves. They included bookkeepers, clerks, health workers and teachers. Others took whichever itinerant jobs became available. In a few instances pioneers were artists, writers or they incorporated their period as a pioneer into their career path. Some established trade stores and other businesses.⁴ Pioneers to Micronesia were invariably associated with the US armed services. Some individuals intended pioneering for fixed terms, and remained in the Pacific for periods ranging from several months to several years. Others moved more permanently.

The first settlement of pioneers was not easy to accomplish. The pioneers did not, or in some cases could not, obtain recognition as religious teachers and received no special status from colonial governments. In Western Samoa and Fiji laws provided that religious groups have at least 300 members before they could obtain visas for foreign religious teachers.⁵ Numerous religious bodies began entering the Pacific in the postwar period and colonial governments monitored the progress of each movement closely. Access to the US Trust Territory of the North Pacific was made difficult by a law preventing employees from supporting particular religions, and, until 1962, by regulations restricting entry to military personnel and their families.⁶ In Western Samoa, an application by an American Bahá'í to enter as a missionary was rejected by a government secretary seeking to ensure that 'the comparative peace surrounding religious matters in Western Samoa' was 'not disturbed by the formation of new or disruptive elements'.⁷

The Bahá'ís were aware of such sensitivities and pioneers were advised to proceed with great caution until officials and others

became familiar with their reasonable manner of operation. They were to avoid publicity or newspaper coverage at first, and to avoid contacting public officials or political leaders until levels of trust and confidence had been established.⁸

Significantly, when former Catholic seminarian and mission teacher Peter Kanare Koru became the first Gilbertese Bahá'í, in Tarawa in 1954, he was urged to be 'very discreet in spreading this Message', as the Bahá'ís did not wish to become a 'source of discord, or arouse opposition'.⁹ But events took their own course.¹⁰ The Abaiang Island Council, whose members had been working with Roy and Elena Fernie to establish a much desired school, unexpectedly voted to expel the Americans and Peter Kanare from the island, and Resident Commissioner Bernacchi and District Commissioner Turbott refused to intervene in the matter. The final episode was tragic. The Resident Commissioner prohibited Kanare from remaining on either Tarawa or Abaiang. While waiting for transport to their home island of Tabiteuea, Kanare's wife, then in labour, was denied adequate medical treatment and died soon after childbirth. Roy Fernie was deported from the colony in November 1955, while Elena Fernie remained on Abaiang until 1956 working with the new, 200-strong Bahá'í community.¹¹

In hindsight, the level of ignorance among officials in some colonies appears comic: in 1956, a bureaucrat in Papua New Guinea described Bahá'í as 'a movement to be watched'. It was thought to be expecting an imminent world war, and to be preparing to re-organise the world in the aftermath.¹² 'Secret files' containing (invariably inadequate) encyclopaedia extracts about Bahá'í were passed over bureaucratic desks as incredulous officials looked for connections with communism. In the Solomon Islands, officials pondered its 'real motives' for sponsoring into the Protectorate over-qualified Persians to assist with business interests. More accurate information gradually filtered through official channels. In 1955, for instance, the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific reassured administrators in British colonies that this was 'not

a militant or political religion and that as a religion there was no objection to it'.¹³

Entry to French territories was particularly difficult. French Government policy denied non-French citizens long-term residency in French Overseas Territories, and New Caledonia and the Society Islands had been assigned to the Australian Bahá'ís, none of whom were eligible for permanent residency. Consequently, pioneers to New Caledonia and French Polynesia were itinerant rather than domiciled, and travelled between colonies when their visas expired. Access to the Loyalty Islands was even more challenging, as at first the Australian Bahá'ís did not know they were designated off-limits to all Europeans, including French citizens.

Committees were established in the metropolitan countries for the purpose of coordinating the movement of pioneers in the Pacific, and to assist them to whatever extent possible. In Australia, the Adelaide-based 'Asian Teaching Committee' corresponded with pioneers in the island groups allocated to Australian and New Zealand responsibility from 1954 until 1959, when the Regional Assembly for the Bahá'ís of the South Pacific was first elected. In the age before modern communications facilities, the Asian Teaching Committee's newsletter, *Koala News*, kept the Bahá'ís informed of developments throughout the region.

Where the pioneers were successful at attracting local members, groups of nine or more Bahá'ís established for themselves the basic unit of the Bahá'í administrative pattern, the Local Spiritual Assembly, which then provided collective leadership of Bahá'í affairs at a local level. By April 1957 there were 210 Bahá'í centres in the Pacific.¹⁴ The first Local Assemblies were established in the main urban centres: in Suva in 1950, Rarotonga in 1956,¹⁵ Honiara and Apia in 1957, Nuku'alofa in 1958, Port Vila in 1960, and Noumea in 1962. An Assembly established in Papeete in 1958 was not sustained in the early years. Within each island group,

additional Local Assemblies were subsequently established in outlying regions. In 1959, the Regional Spiritual Assembly of the South Pacific was established, with jurisdiction over 10 island groups. By 1963, there were 36 Local Assemblies, 127 localities, and some 1,550 Bahá'ís in the South Pacific (800 of whom were in the Solomon Islands).

Charles Forman considered the growth of Bahá'í communities in the Pacific 'surprising':

Stemming from a reformist movement in Islam and appealing mostly to intellectuals in the West, with a message of interreligious unity and international, interracial harmony, they seemed poorly adapted to growth among vigorously Christian, practical peoples with little cosmopolitan experience. Yet a certain amount of response was forthcoming from some youths of wider experience and education and from some village folk among whom their missionaries settled. They had some noticeable response in Fiji, Kiribati, the Solomons, Tonga, Samoa, and Vanuatu. Probably their greatest single increase came in 1966 when they won the adherence of Tommy Kabu, leader of an important modernising movement in the Purari river area of Papua, along with many of his followers.¹⁶

The lack of 'cosmopolitan experience' among Islanders in the 1950s might have made more difficult the task the first Bahá'ís in the Pacific had in communicating the full implications of Bahá'í teachings — such as the unity of God and of His prophets, the principle of independent and rational investigation in the pursuit of 'truth', the elimination of all forms of superstition and prejudice, the equality of the sexes, compulsory education, abolition of extremes of poverty and wealth, and the adoption of an auxiliary international language. These and other principles, seen by Bahá'ís as necessary for the establishment of a 'permanent and universal peace',¹⁷ and based on a conception of religion as providing the

basis for order and progress in society, nevertheless remained at the core of the pioneers' message, no matter how remote the clan, village or island being addressed.

A second phase in the propagation process comprised a period of isolated contacts with individuals, and sporadic conversions. The techniques adopted by the Bahá'ís to spread their message were relatively straightforward. News that a new European was in town, who spoke of a religion that was in some ways similar to Christianity, but in other ways different, was sufficient to attract initial inquirers. One such convert was Tommy Kabu (1922?–69) from the I'ai tribe of the Papuan Gulf's Purari people.¹⁸ Intent on effecting cultural, social and economic development among the Purari, Kabu had embraced the Bahá'í teachings as the vehicle for change, but he died before significant advances were made. A common theme in the conversion not only of Kabu, but of the New Irelander Apelis Mazakmat, the Malaitan Hamuel Hoahania and the Gilbertese Peter Kanare Koru, was their attraction to the racial equality practised by the pioneers and their desire to implement such equality in their societies. The first converts in Samoa and Tonga, Niuoleava Tuataga and Lisiata Maka, were well educated and some others had trained in theological colleges.¹⁹

It has been suggested that Islanders who converted to newly arrived religions, including Bahá'í, did so on the basis of discontent with the established missions, and in some cases were the 'malcontents' of their societies. While there is no doubt that this might have been so in particular cases, insufficient knowledge has been gathered to establish trends. Kirata suggests that those who accepted the Bahá'í Faith in Kiribati had been just 'nominal Christians'.²⁰ The recollection of Peter Kaltoli Napakaurana, of Irira Tenuku on Efate, has parallels with incidents in the Solomons, Papua New Guinea and elsewhere:

During 1953 there were many stories circulating in Port Vila, on Efate Island, and subsequently all over the New

Hebrides, about the arrival of a woman missionary who had brought new teachings from God. This person was Mrs Bertha Dobbins. In 1954, I heard this news inside the Chief's nakamal on Ifira Tenuku [Fila Island], and decided that I should go and find out for myself the new Message. So one Sunday morning, I went to visit this woman missionary. She explained some of the sacred verses in the Bible, and I heard the name Bahá'u'lláh for the first time. I was very interested in her explanations. Some time later, I went back to Mrs Dobbins and told her that I wished to join the Bahá'í Faith.²¹

The absence of a priesthood meant that the community was not divided into 'clergy' and 'laity'. Furthermore, having no clergy, the Bahá'ís did not seek to recruit young men to be the equivalent of 'catechists' or as candidates for training as clerics. The absence of such opportunities might even have discouraged potential converts, and this might have contributed to the initial attraction to, then drift from, the Bahá'í community of such noted Islanders as Bill Gina and Francis Kikolo in the Solomons. The British Administration in the Solomons Islands felt that the conversion of Bill Gina, the best-educated Solomon Islander of his time, presented a 'very real possibility' that the Bahá'ís would 'expand at the expense of the Methodist Mission'.²² However, Gina returned to a secure position in the Methodist Mission.²³ Francis Kikolo also withdrew his membership.²⁴ In Papua New Guinea, Elliot Elijah demonstrated considerable interest at the same time that Apelis Mazakmat joined; and in Fiji, Ratu Meli Loki became a Bahá'í for a period.

As Bahá'í communities grew in size, pioneers ventured out of the towns to speak about the faith in villages where a link had been established, or from which they had received an invitation. In Papua New Guinea, Mazakmat, who met the Bahá'í Vi Hoehnke while teaching at a school on Manus, was attracted by the Bahá'í teaching of racial equality. To the European missionaries in the

Nalik area, Mazakmat (1920–86) epitomised the postwar 'native trouble-maker'. Of mixed Catholic/Methodist parentage, he clashed with a Catholic priest in 1949 who refused to wed him to a Methodist woman. He became a Bahá'í early in 1956, after learning more about it from Rodney Hancock in Rabaul. Mazakmat took Hancock to some New Ireland villages, and introduced him to friends he thought would be interested in the Bahá'í teachings. Of the several villages Hancock spoke in, the response in Madina was the most immediate, and several people joined. The formation of a nine-member Local Assembly in Medina in 1958 was noted with curiosity.²⁵

Early expansion in the Solomon Islands similarly followed an invitation to the Bahá'ís. Hamuel Hoahania received overtures from the Takataka, a 'custom' society that had never accepted Christianity, to learn more about the Bahá'í faith. A Takataka chief, Waiparo, who had known Alvin Blum, had instructed them prior to his death to 'look for the man who was to come with the Bahá'í Faith and to accept it'.²⁶ The situation was complex, as police intelligence felt that Waiparo was looking for a religion through which he could avoid paying government taxes.²⁷ Late in 1962, Gertrude Blum spent three weeks on Malaita during which time there were 80 declarations in four villages. Some 300 Malaitans subsequently became Bahá'ís, a success that prompted some South Sea Evangelical Mission (SSEM) mission workers, who had been attempting to attract these people for a considerable period of time, to spread false rumours about the Bahá'ís and the pioneers.²⁸ By 1963, there were 15 Bahá'í groups in the Solomon Islands, four of which had reached assembly status (Honiara and Roroni on Guadalcanal and Auki and Hau Hui on Malaita); nine of the 11 other localities were on Malaita.

An expedition to Tanna in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) was less successful than the work on Malaita that had inspired it. A young American who had recently become a Bahá'í in Australia

arrived in the New Hebrides early in 1962. Shortly after, he visited Tanna to teach the cargo community at Sulphur Bay known as *John Frum*. These people, through their interpretation of the American military presence on Tanna prior to and during World War II, had developed expectations that Americans would at some future time deliver to them a large cache of Western goods, and sustained an ideology that rejected the Presbyterian Church on the island, and demonstrated ambivalent attitudes toward colonial authority and sovereignty. Despite the British Administration's reservations about the American's impact on the cultists' expectations, he and New Hebridean Bahá'í Taumoe Kalsakau approached customary chiefs and cultists, as well as Catholic, Adventist and Presbyterian clergy to present Bahá'í literature.²⁹

In some places the third phase of growth comprised family or sub-clan conversion. Rarely did an entire family, or an entire clan, choose to change religion, and this 'fracturing' of social units, which remains prevalent in Pacific societies, was attributed to the actions of the Bahá'ís (or missionaries, in the case of other denominations), rather than to the conscious and free actions of Pacific Islanders.

The converts on New Ireland in Papua New Guinea were drawn from several of Nalik's seven clans, and included the area's supreme *malanggan* carvers, Michael Homerang (Mohokala clan) and Sinaila (Mohomaraba clan). Early in 1958, there were a further 10 conversions, and some 30-40 in the next four years.³⁰ According to Hancock, the Methodist mission had 'given up' the Medina people, as many were 'drunkards who had their own brews and stills', and many responded simply because Hancock, by staying in village houses and eating off the same plates and with the same spoons as the villagers, broke with the traditional 'missionary' habit of eating and sleeping separately.³¹

In the fourth phase, Bahá'í communities established Local Assemblies and began to administer their own affairs. By 1959, there were sufficient Local Assemblies throughout the Pacific to

establish a Regional Assembly for the Pacific Islands. By virtue of its numerical strength in proportion to the other assemblies, Tuarubu Assembly on Abaiang in the Gilbert Islands was eligible to send eight of the 19 delegates to a convention, yet because of its remoteness, the prospect of doing so was limited. Some pioneers were apprehensive about how the lack of familiarity with the community's regional administrative affairs and personnel on the part of so many delegates might affect the composition of the Regional Assembly in its first years (and, by implication, hinder its administrative effectiveness).

The Assembly faced several major obstacles to its effective functioning. The paucity of transport and communication facilities across vast distances made the election of delegates to an annual regional convention immensely difficult. Even where voting by mail was possible, the delegates in one location were poorly equipped to assess the merits of Bahá'ís living elsewhere. Further obstacles included lack of budget and manpower.

Despite such limitations, 14 of 20 Local Assemblies in the region were run totally by Islanders by July 1962. The formation of 36 Local Assemblies by 1963 meant that no less than 324 adult Bahá'ís, of both sexes, were directly involved in the administration of their local Bahá'í communities. While this rapid localisation was in some ways advantageous, it also brought difficulties. Few Islander Bahá'ís had a deep knowledge of Bahá'í administration, and, within a few years, there were many areas in which the numbers were adequate to form Local Assemblies, but the ability to do so was lacking.³² The administrative and leadership structure of this community had been localised at almost the same speed as it was propagated. Few Pacific Islanders, however, were elected to the Regional Assembly in the first five years.

The Bahá'í strategy for mission, to the extent that there was one, did not consist of acquiring land and building mission stations, or establishing educational and health facilities through

which to minister to the surrounding population. It comprised, rather, the sharing of the Bahá'í principles with those willing to give them a hearing, seeking their positive response and incorporating them at the local level into the process of creating Bahá'í communities. If schools were to appear, they would emerge from indigenous rather than imposed aspirations; if meeting houses were built, or conferences convened, the activities would have as their basis an attraction of hearts and minds, and have as their focus the discussion of human and social relationships.

Several items of correspondence exist indicating the manner in which Bahá'í Pacific Islanders approached interreligious encounters. A travelling teacher reported the process as used in Western Samoa in 1962:

At the beginning of our lectures, we read that law about the Sabbath Day from the Bible, adding the social laws of Moses, and then confined the talk about the confirmation of the laws from that time on until Bahá'u'lláh give us the new laws to suit the need of the people of this generation which will make them live in harmony, peace and justice. Five new believers enrolled after our lecture.³³

Discussions concerning Christian doctrines, as well as the linkage between Christian belief and Islander culture, were often at the heart of exchanges. Timeon Leaiti reported his visit home to the Ellice Islands, having become a Bahá'í in the Gilbert Islands:

When I first arrived here, my family you know were all Christians and they tried to change my opinion. They said 'you must turn back to the L.M.S. then you will get peace, but I said no, I am a Bahá'í Faith. A Christmas day came, and the head of the L.M.S. (old Beru men) in the Maneaba needed myself for talking about my Faith. I did, but their hearts were very hard.³⁴

New Hebridean Bahá'ís who sought to 'travel teach' on outer islands were subject to close inquiry by church members. On

Tongoa in 1962, Toaro Pakoa was called before a 'session meeting' of the Presbyterian Church Council, who wanted to know how he could espouse another religion, having been baptised a Presbyterian. Travel teachers to Aneityum and Tanna received similar treatment.³⁵ Consequently, it was not easy to find volunteers for such trips, and Bertha Dobbins' assessment was:

It would be better if the natives themselves were helped to carry the message to their waiting brothers and sisters in other islands. The whole of the teaching here has been held up on account of means to get to places and people must be prepared to stay for a while in each area.³⁶

Few pioneers appear to have made a study of the traditional culture of the peoples with whom they now lived, contenting themselves with a familiarity of the customs and habits of everyday life, and leaving to the Islanders the task of interpreting what modifications were required in custom to satisfy the values and standards of their newly adopted faith.³⁷

This placement of spiritual before material development precluded the premature evolution of Bahá'í schools, transport systems and medical services, which many mission societies regarded as essential requisites to the task of church-building. Occasionally, Pacific Bahá'í communities were judged ineffective because such expectations were not met. The Solomon Islands colonial administration, for instance, anticipated a surge in membership in the Western Solomons after the conversion of Belshazzar Gina, providing that the Bahá'ís provided health and medical services equal to those run by the established mission societies.³⁸ In a similar vein, the Anglican Bishop of Melanesia warned the annual conference of the Melanesian Brotherhood in 1962 against 'new sects' that had 'no hospitals, no doctors or nurses, no schools and no teachers', and which were therefore 'fruitless'.³⁹ Even census reports noted which religions were providing educational facilities.⁴⁰

Several Pacific Bahá'í communities did establish schools. Education was prized by all Islanders keen for their children to participate in the expanding possibilities beyond the village, and the Bahá'í writings emphasised the importance of education for both sexes. But this eagerness was frequently dampened by the lack of resources available within the Bahá'í community. On Malaita in the Solomon Islands, the Hau Hui Bahá'ís wanted a school, and were prepared to build it on land donated by Hamuel. In the New Hebrides, Bertha Dobbins' 'Nur' school operated from 1954 until 1971. On Santo, the Rowhani Bahá'í School established at Luganville in 1999 had almost 80 kindergarten and primary students by 2003.⁴¹ Another Bahá'í-inspired school, the 'Ocean of Light', was established in Tonga in 1996.⁴²

The desire of the first Bahá'í pioneers to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands to establish a school showed the extent to which the school was a contested site.⁴³ All Gilbertese were anxious that their children receive adequate schooling. For Bahá'í parents, the need was particularly felt since mission schools, although funded by the Administration, frequently refused to teach the children of Bahá'ís.⁴⁴ Government educational facilities were, moreover, inadequate to meet demand. The danger that one's children might not become educated influenced some Bahá'í parents to recant their faith, but there were sufficient numbers to continue.⁴⁵ The first Gilbertese Bahá'í school, at Tuarubu on Abaiang, had two government-registered teachers and approximately 30 students. But disillusionment set in once Elena Fernie left in 1956, and some parents returned their sons to the island's Catholic secondary school.

Four schools were established about the beginning of 1961, and, by 1963, there were eight Bahá'í primary schools — in Abaiang, Tuarabu, Tabiteuea, Eita, Utiroa, Taku and Tabetuea. But this hardly constituted an 'education system': school teachers were paid in coconuts;⁴⁶ Abaiang school was held in the teacher Taam's

house.⁴⁷ In 1962, some Gilbertese bypassed the Regional Assembly and petitioned the US National Assembly for assistance in building a Bahá'í college. The North American Assembly was told, after consulting the South Pacific Regional Assembly, that Islanders in such remote places held the notion that Americans had the means to solve all their problems; no college was built.⁴⁸

As noted at the outset, Bahá'í beliefs were not necessarily antagonistic to custom, and some of the largest concentrations of Bahá'ís have emerged on islands such as Tanna in Vanuatu and Malaita in the Solomon Islands, where custom has remained particularly strong. This is not to say, on the other hand, that customary laws were in complete accord with Bahá'í laws, and some accommodations of the former to the latter have had to be made in the application of Bahá'í laws in the Pacific context. Bahá'í laws were applied compassionately: new converts were granted extended periods in which to align their personal status with Bahá'í standards, and polygamous marriages contracted prior to conversion were not disbanded (although additional partners could not be acquired).⁴⁹ Bahá'ís do not become involved in partisan politics, believing that such systems are premised on conflict and cannot ultimately achieve social unity. The Bahá'í teaching that the rights of women are equal to those of men constituted a significant challenge to Pacific Bahá'í communities.

David Barrett's 'World Religious Statistics' in the 1988 *Britannica Book of the Year* (1988, p. 303) enumerated 59,000 Bahá'ís in Oceania, but the exact size of Pacific Island Bahá'í populations remains hard to establish. In Kiribati, for instance, the 1985 national census indicated that 1,503 Gilbertese, 2.38 per cent of the population of 63,045, were Bahá'ís,⁵⁰ while a Bahá'í source suggests a figure, in 1987, of 17.9 per cent.⁵¹ In Tonga the proportion of the national population that are Bahá'í rose from 3.9 per cent in 1983 to 6.3 per cent in 1987. In Tuvalu, the Bahá'í population rose in this period from 3 to 5.8 per cent, and, in the

Marshall Islands, from 2 to 11.5 per cent. Similar growth rates are reported in other Pacific nations, although poor progress in the French Overseas Territories (New Caledonia, Loyalty Islands, French Polynesia and the Marquesas Islands) and the Cook Islands (a Polynesian nation in free association with New Zealand), is so far without easy explanation.⁵²

In absolute terms, the Papua New Guinea Bahá'í community has the largest membership in the Pacific — approximately 60,000. In addition to being a rapidly growing community, it is geographically dispersed: by 1991, there were Bahá'í communities in 87 of the country's 88 districts, at least three LSAs in each of its 19 provinces, and a total of 259 LSAs nationwide. In recent years the press has covered such activities as the National Convention, participation of Papua New Guinean Bahá'ís in the centenary of the death of Bahá'u'lláh in Haifa and Akka, and a seminar on 'work ethics and productivity' sponsored by the Port Moresby LSA.⁵³

The Regional Spiritual Assembly of the South Pacific Islands, established in 1959, provided the basis for the subsequent emergence in 1964 of two regional authorities, one based in Honiara, for the South-West Pacific Ocean (Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Loyalty Islands, New Hebrides); the other continuing in Suva, administering the South Pacific Ocean (Fiji, Gilbert and Ellice Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Nauru). From these regional bodies, individual national assemblies emerged between 1967 and 1985. By 1988 there were 730 Local Assemblies in Australasia and a total of 2,866 localities. In 1992, these figures had risen to 876 and 4,094.⁵⁴ In 2000 the *World Christian Encyclopaedia* estimated the number of Bahá'ís in Oceania at 110,387.⁵⁵

Although the general conclusion can be made that the Pacific Bahá'í communities emerged rapidly since the years of the World Crusade and quickly indigenised their institutions, there was also significant difference between the experience of the various national communities. Whereas Bahá'ís in New Caledonia were

physically attacked as late as 2004 for their beliefs and required a judicial ruling (from the Noumea Correctional Court) to confirm their right to freedom of religion,⁵⁶ the Bahá'ís of Samoa dedicated their unique House of Worship in 1984 and count the head of state (Malietoa Tanumafili II) among their members. Numerical progress and legal recognition are two measures of progress. Perhaps, more significantly, after 50 years of development, the Pacific Bahá'ís constitute a strong moral force, able to form partnerships with other progressive forces in the development of Pacific Island countries in the new 'Pacific century'.

Footnotes

- 1 This chapter was researched in government, mission and Bahá'í archives throughout the Pacific. The following abbreviations are used in this chapter: Papua New Guinea — **PNG**; Solomon Islands National Archives — **SI**; Church of Melanesia Archives, Solomon Islands National Archives — **CM**; Kiribati National Archives — **KI**; and New Zealand National Archives — **NZ**. Bahá'í archives referred to are: Australia — **ABA**; Fiji — **FBA**; Kiribati — **KBA**; Samoa — **SBA**; and Vanuatu — **VBA**. Early sections of this chapter adapt material presented in my 'Pacific Bahá'í Communities 1950–1964', in Donald H. Rubinstein (ed.), *Pacific History: Papers from the 8th Pacific History Association Conference* (Guam, 1992) pp. 73–95. For additional material, I am most grateful to the National Assemblies of the Bahá'ís of the Cook Islands, Kiribati, New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.
- 2 On the participation of New Zealand Bahá'ís in the development of Pacific Islands' Bahá'í communities, see J. Camrass, *Resolute Advance. A History of the Bahá'í Faith in New Zealand 1912–2001* (Auckland, 2001).
- 3 Regional Assembly to Bill Maxwell, July 29, 1962, 'Regional Spiritual Assembly', **FBA**.
- 4 Harold M. Ross, 'Competition for Baegu Souls: Mission Rivalry on Malaita, Solomon Islands', in James Boutilier et al (eds), *Mission, Church, and Sect in Oceania* (Ann Arbor, 1978), p. 165.
- 5 RSA secretary to RSA members, June 7, 1962, 'Percival', **SBA**.
- 6 Marcia Atwater, an American school teacher, entered in August 1954, but had little contact with the Marshallese before she left in March 1955. Betty Llaas was present from March 1956 to July 1959, then Murial Snay from August 1957 to June 1959. In 1960, no Bahá'ís remained: NSA of the US to RSA, July 17, 1960, 'NSA of USA', **FBA**.
- 7 Secretary, Government of Western Samoa, to Secretary, Department of Island Territories, Wellington, September 18, 1953, Island Territories series 1/69/63, File LMN 1/10, **NZ**. Edith Danielson, unable to enter Western Samoa, later settled in the Cook Islands. Ironically, the head of state of Western Samoa, Malieatoa Tanumafili II, was later the first reigning monarch in any part of the world to become a Bahá'í.
- 8 International Teaching Centre to All Pioneers, December 7, 1953, possession of Vi Hoehnke.
- 9 In Graham Hassall (ed.), *Messages to the Antipodes: Communications from Shoghi Effendi to Australasia* (Mona Vale, 1997).
- 10 Teeruro Ieuti, *The Kiribati Protestant Church and the New Religious Movements 1860–1985* (Suva, 1992), p. 101. For detail, see ch. 3: 'The Bahá'í World Faith'; *The Bahá'í World, 1954–63*, pp. 612, 1109, cited in Ieuti, p. 101.
- 11 **KI**, 42/6/3. This story is told in detail in Graham Hassall, 'The Bahá'í Faith, Christianity and Local Religions in the Pacific Islands: The Case of Gilbert

- and Ellis Islands', M. Sharon, (ed.), *Studies in Modern Religions, Religious Movements and the Babi-Bahá'í Faiths Studies in the History of Religions* (Brill Academic Publications, 2004).
- 12 D. Clifton-Basset to the Assistant Administrator, Port Moresby, July 14, 1956, 53–68/12/2, **PNG**.
 - 13 Confidential Minutes of District Commissioners' Conference, July 27–29, 1955, 12/1/16, BSIP Records, **SI**.
 - 14 Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World* (Wilmette), p. 106.
 - 15 Comprising the Bahá'ís of Muri and Arorangi villages.
 - 16 Charles Forman, *Island Churches of the South Pacific*, p. 200.
 - 17 Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette, 1938), pp. XI–XII.
 - 18 See Graham Hassall, 'The Failure of the Tommy Kabu Movement: a Reassessment of the Evidence', *Pacific Studies*, 14: 2 (1991). Kabu's conversion is noted by J. K. Parratt, 'Religious Change in Port Moresby', *Oceania*, XLI (1970), p. 2.
 - 19 Personal communication, Suhayl Ala'í, Suva, July 9, 1986.
 - 20 Baranite Kirata, 'Spiritual Beliefs', *Kiribati: A Changing Atoll Culture* (Suva, 1985), p. 83.
 - 21 Peter Kaltoli Napakaurana, 'Testimonies of Pacific Islanders as to how they heard of the Faith', National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Vanuatu, December 3, 1993, Vila, Vanuatu.
 - 22 'Review of Politico-Religious Trends in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate' (March 1959), BSIP FSC 3, Vol 1, List 21, IX, **SI**.
 - 23 For a mission perspective on Gina's Bahá'í involvements, see G. C. Carter, *Yours in His Service: A Reflection on the Life and Times of Reverend Belshazzar Gina of Solomon Islands* (Honiara, 1990).
 - 24 Colin Alen, District Commissioner, Western Solomons, March 19, 1947, 11/SG/47 BSIP List 4, C91, **SI**. For one version of events see G. C. Carter, *Yours in His Service*, (Honiara, 1990), p. 76.
 - 25 'Native Thought File', T. G. Aitchison, 'Native Thought File', February 18, 1959, New Ireland District, 13913–51/1/9, TPNG records, **PNG**.
 - 26 Irene Jackson to RSA members, 1962, 'Percival', **FBA**.
 - 27 Police Patrol Report, July 15, 1958, CF/DA/13/5, BSIP List 12/III, **SI**.
 - 28 Hau Hui Local Assembly, October 8, 1962, in letter to Regional Assembly Members, June 7, 1963(?), 'Percival', **FBA**.
 - 29 Paul Slaughter to RSA, June 16, 1962, 'Percival', **FBA**.
 - 30 *Koala News*, 24 (April 1956), p. 2; 62 (April 1959), p. 3; *Australian Bahá'í Bulletin* (May 1956), p. 4; (July 1958), p. 2; (May 1959), p. 2; (September 1959), p. 9.
 - 31 Interview, Kimbe, New Britain, December 12, 1986.
 - 32 NSA South Pacific to NSA Australia, February 4, 1966, 0045/0012, **ABA**.
 - 33 V. Lee to ITC Samoa, November 19, 1962, 'ITC File 1962', **SBA**.

- 34 June 23, 1962, folder (no title), **KBA**.
- 35 New Hebrides ITC to RSA, April 1, 1961, ITC Minute Book 1960–61, **VBA**.
- 36 'Inter-Island Teaching Conference July 19–22, 1962', ITC Minute Book 1960, 'RSA of the Bahá'ís of the South Pacific', **VBA**.
- 37 Irene Williams, MS, 1985.
- 38 'Review of Politico-Religious Trends' (March 1959), BSIP FSC 3, Vol 1, List 21.IX, **SI**.
- 39 F2.1. Bishop's Correspondence, Melanesian Brotherhood 1958–64, **CM**.
- 40 Eric E. Bailey, *Republic of Kiribati. Report on the 1978 Census of Population and Housing, Vol. III* (Tarawa, 1983), pp. 97–8.
- 41 *50th Anniversary of the Bahá'í Faith in Vanuatu: A Commemorative Booklet* (Port Vila, 2003).
- 42 National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Tonga, *A History of the Bahá'í Faith in Tonga* (Nuku'alofa, 2004).
- 43 *Kiribati: A Changing Atoll Culture* (Suva, 1985), p. 83, is incorrect in stating that the Bahá'í faith became operative in these islands at the beginning of the 1960s.
- 44 NSA South Pacific to the Universal House of Justice, July 16, 1966, 0045/0012, **ABA**.
- 45 Mabel Sneider complained of some Gilbertese Bahá'ís that 'they do not know enough to want to suffer for the Faith', ITC of the GEIC to RSA, July 15, 1962, 'Percival', **FBA**.
- 46 Regional Assembly to the United States National Assembly, 'NSA of RSA'; Regional Assembly to Bill Maxwell, 'Regional Spiritual Assembly', **FBA**.
- 47 RSA to Hands of the Cause, July 28, 1961, 'World Centre of the Faith — General Correspondence'; ITC GEIC to RSA 13 July 1962, 'Percival', **FBA**.
- 48 Regional Assembly to United States National Assembly, May 31, 1962, 'NSA of USA', **FBA**.
- 49 Hands to RSA, January 1, 1961, 'World Centre of the Faith', **FBA**.
- 50 Kiribati, Statistics Office, Ministry of Finance, Bulletin No. 3/85, 1985 Population Census, September 25, 1985.
- 51 *Bahá'í News* (July 1987), p. 4.
- 52 Although relatively small in size, these communities nonetheless have interesting and detailed histories. For Cook Islands, for instance, see Georgie Skeaff, *Development of the Bahá'í Faith in the Cook Islands: A Record* (Rarotonga, 2004).
- 53 *Times of Papua New Guinea* (May 7, 1992), p. 5; (May 28, 1992), p. 19; (June 18, 1992), p. 22; *Post-Courier* (July 11, 1995); (July 19, 1995).
- 54 Universal House of Justice, *The Six Year Plan 1986-1992: Summary of Achievements* (Haifa, 1993), p. 114.
- 55 David Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopaedia* (2001), cited at www.adherents.com on February 9, 2005.
- 56 National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands, Annual Report 160BE (2004).

Doing Theology in the New Pacific

Kambati Uriam

If anyone tries to clear a path in the undergrowth of Pacific Island theological thinking in the half-century from 1947, and especially in trying to follow what seems like a trek in the theological thinking of Pacific Islanders, hoping to end up in the present at some incredible idea that would be a contribution to worldwide theological discussion, one is in for disappointment, for theological thinking in the islands has never been a clear, single-lined process. In fact, it has never been that way in contemplative theology or in practical theology (experiences of Christians). The fact is that social, economic and political realities influenced theological thinking of ordinary church members, their leaders and their intellectuals. This chapter considers the story of Pacific Islanders as they formulate theology in the islands. It looks specifically at the beginnings of serious theological reflection in the islands after World War II. It discusses Christian thinking in the postwar period and examines why it was moving away from mission-oriented and institutional-centred thinking, in which sectarianism and radical proselytisation were emphasised — the Christendom vision and ideal — to a different way of thinking, ecumenical in perspective, contextual, interpretative and contemplative in its focus. A brief review of the old type of

theological training is necessary if one is to appreciate this trend and to understand the chasm that emerged, and is widening, between the 'old type of theological thinking' and modern Pacific Islander theological thinking since the 1960s.¹

Theological Education and Thinking in the First Half of the 20th Century

Most theological schools before World War II were born of the dire need to train pastors and Christian leaders, laity and religious, to help in the expansion as well as the maintenance of not only Christian life but Christian properties. And it is this expansion and maintenance that were the dominant features of theological schools in the islands before World War II. Many people were required to help with carpentry work, work as agricultural leading hands and supervisors, or as managers in stores, which some missions were running to help support themselves, and so most of the training in theological schools was not entirely lessons and classes in theology or biblical studies. There were many 'skills' to be learnt, many of which were really 'work' — building more houses in the theological compound or maintaining the local houses of the missionaries, or helping in the building of a new church in an adjacent village. Today, many of the old generation of ministers who went through this type of theological training before World War II always boast that their theology is really of the land, learning how to carry out their ministry in the islands in the midst of the people. Pastor Teimarawa in Kiribati, for instance, always says in his colloquiums with first-year theological students at Tangintebu Theological College that in his theological days, he was 'given stones, and gravels to build their theology and ministry on, and not so much papers and books and ideas. And we live on fish we caught ourselves and *te buatoro* [a very tough *babai* pudding], not on tinned fish or rice'. His training, which was similar to many old ministers in other parts of the Pacific, certainly made him more

conscious of living very close to the land and the people, and made him a very industrious minister. But sometimes it makes one wonder at the way he treated members of the Roman Catholic Church and others belonging to the new religious groups whether his kind of training, which made him quite industrious, had something left out of it. And very often, like many other pastors who went through Rongorongo Training Institute, Teimarawa defended his faith and gained new members to his 'Protestant Christendom' more with his fists than with good dialogue and reasoning.

Life in the theological colleges before World War II involved a lot of manual labour. And, in most colleges, there were only morning classes and the afternoon was spent in manual work — in the gardens or building or maintaining houses. Where there was going to be a lot of labour required in the compounds and in the gardens, more time in the classroom was given to the teaching of carpentry skills or agricultural techniques than to lessons in theology or biblical studies. Sometimes, only three days in the week were devoted to theological or academic studies. Many of the old ministers boast that they, during their ministry, would have built more houses or buildings and planted more gardens than the 'idle' young ministers of today. And many of the old, retired ministers look at the churches or the schools they built, as well as the huge plantations they started, as some of the highlights of their ministry.

In most of the theological colleges, students usually supported themselves, and sometimes their families would help by giving food to the colleges. A student was required to be industrious and productive. And because of the constant irregularity of life in the colleges, many of the students had learnt how to plan their lives to suit such an irregular and hard life. But even with all their planning and attempts to endure life in the college, there were times when the students felt that the missionaries were demanding too much of them, using them as free labour, and some never

finished their studies and left the theological college because of that. Very often, the ones who stayed were either children of ministers, who were too scared of their parents to leave the college, or students sent and supported by their village church, who had no desire to annoy or let the village down. Many of those who left felt that the missionaries were making themselves rulers and enjoying themselves in their own small 'kingdoms' among the natives. However, most students stayed on to finish their studies and some boast that they 'went to hell' and survived. Others saw their experience in the college differently: 'It was the most enjoyable and memorable part of my life.'²

For those in the Roman Catholic seminaries, their training did not usually require as much industry and labour as the students in the Protestant theological schools: the students 'feel themselves strong because they are supported and feel themselves light because they are directed'. Most of the theological students survived and finished their training only because of the great life they thought they would experience in the villages. For some, the pride of being a graduate of a theological college helped them to finish. In Samoa and in Kiribati, there was always a wife 'prepared' by the missionaries and ready at the end of one's studies to go with one to one's new post. That was an incentive for many students to finish their training.³ Theological education was a mixture of many things for Islanders: some thought of it as the start of a career in life; others, an adult education; others, training to become a man-of-trade for the church. Whatever their views, all knew that at the end of their studies they would become a village pastor. Whether they enjoyed or wanted to forget their time at the college, most accepted that the type of training they went through was part of the 'required' training for a minister of the Word.

After World War II, many theological colleges in the Pacific were beginning to change the way they trained their students. In some places, where permanent materials had replaced the old local

materials, and where churches had grown and were beginning to contribute significantly to the life of the college, more time was spent with students in the classrooms, and less in the gardens and workshops. But it was really the environment that changed considerably the way theological schools taught their students. Churches had become employers and, like a business, they required not only pious ministers, but highly trained workers who could deliver what was required of them and perhaps more. Many congregations wanted a minister who not only could preach a good sermon, but one who could do many other things. Certainly, each village would have its own idea of a good minister, but most shared the view that unless the minister could communicate with them and understand what was happening in the village, he was not a good minister. Competition from the growing new religious groups was also beginning to be felt. The leaders of these groups were raising questions to which the villagers had no answers; either the minister provided them with an answer or they would lose a member to the new religious groups.⁴ In society in general, where many people were struggling to make sense of the changes that were taking place, it seemed that new problems could no longer be solved with the old solutions or simply with piety and prayer. A well-educated, well-trained, and well-informed minister was called for by the people. And although many churches still wanted their theological schools to be the place for the 'highest education' in the islands, most wanted a relevant ministry to emerge from the theological schools.

The desire for a ministry relevant to the changing times had for some time been a concern of many churches in other parts of the world, particularly in developing countries. But it was the meeting of the International Missionary Council held in Madras, India, in 1938 that awoke the churches to the fact that unless they did something about their growing irrelevancy, the world would march over them and the people would ignore their message. One of the

suggested solutions at Madras was a re-examination of theological schools. At a meeting in Morpeth, Australia, of the South Pacific Christian Conference in 1948, this 'theological concern' was raised, and there was much concern about the life and work of the churches in the Pacific. The possibility of establishing a council for the island churches to share their particular experiences and help one another was discussed as well. When the idea of establishing a 'Conference of Churches for the Pacific', and of finding a way to make theological education in the Islands relevant to the conditions of the changing Pacific were finally put to the leaders of the missions and island churches at their two-week meeting (April 22–May 4) at Malua Theological College in 1961, everybody thought they were great ideas.

Certainly, before the Malua Conference in 1961, many island churches had tried to train their ministers in the way they thought would make them relevant in the villages. They included music, for instance, which was important to the worship life and village festivities, and carpentry, as many ministers were likely to be pioneer ministers in their new parishes and would benefit from some knowledge of carpentry and building, as well as of the geography of the South Pacific. These were taught alongside the more traditional theological subjects. Some missionaries, however, in their attempt to make theological studies intellectually stimulating and keep the minister ahead of his congregation, went beyond relevancy and became quite ambitious. For example, Moulton of Tonga introduced Euclid and ancient history, outlines of English and French histories, and even astronomy and chemistry to his students.⁵ Some missionaries thought that a good theological education meant keeping the students in touch with the kind of literature and ideas available to students in Western theological schools. And so at Rongorongo Training Institute, for instance, there was a lot of translation of several European and American books, such as Alfred Sadd's translation of Charles Scott's lectures at Trinity College, published as *Ethics in the New Testament*.⁶

Some churches, in their attempt to become relevant, had separated many of the vocational or technical subjects from the traditional theological courses. In Tonga, the Methodist theological college, which had been joined to the Tupou and Tonga college, was separated and became Sia'atoutai Theological College in 1948. Other theological colleges, in order to become more centralised and accessible to the people, moved to the capital or the cities. Tangintebu Theological College in Kiribati, for instance, was moved from Beru, an outer island, to Tarawa, the capital of the island group in 1960. But whatever churches did with their theological schools, there was still a growing feeling that many of the changes in the islands were not being satisfactorily addressed by the ministers coming out of these colleges. Many people, including several church leaders, continued to think that theological schools were out of touch with real life, which was changing rapidly in the islands.

For most of the leaders of missions and churches present at the meeting in Malua in 1961, improving the relevancy of theological schools meant raising theological education to the level of that in Western theological colleges through the use of good teaching methods, better trained theological teachers, better teaching materials and facilities, and more participation of those trained for the ministry in the activities and day-to-day lives of the people. However, most island churches lacked the personnel and money to meet such changes. For many of the churches, the idea raised in the Morpeth Conference of establishing a central Pacific theological school was more practical and reasonable.

The committee that met to discuss ways of improving theological education in the islands, selected by the Malua 1961 conference, met in Suva at Dudley House High School from May 7 to 13 that year.⁷ The meeting was chaired by Charles W. Forman, a professor of history at Yale Divinity School. The committee was reminded by Bishop Leslie Newbigin that the main function of the

meeting was to look at the concerns raised at the Malua conference and to consider seriously its recommendation. Two of the main concerns highlighted in the report, made by the Commission on the Ministry, was for the church, especially ministers, to continue to be a prophetic voice in the community; the other was the raising of 'the standard of theological training in all parts of the Pacific' so that these 'prophets' would be suitable for the islands. The recommendation of the report was the establishment of a Central Theological College in the Pacific.

For the Roman Catholic Church, the issue of relevant training for priests was also a real problem. And though some of their leaders were interested in training that was in tune with changes in the islands, there were also those among the Roman Catholic leadership who felt that 'real' theology was not something for Islanders. They thought that theology was a subject too complicated for Islanders to grasp. But whatever the differences of opinion among the Roman Catholic leadership, theological education was not the real problem for the majority of them; rather, it was getting well-educated young men to join the priesthood, as there were a lot of choices now available for young men after they finished their secondary education. Even for those who had been 'dedicated' by their parents to become priests, the more interesting careers now available in the islands and the lure of new lifestyles made the priesthood and a life of celibacy an uninteresting career for many young men. Certainly, many young men 'promised' to the church did not enter the seminaries. Many, after completing their secondary education, chose to become school teachers, medical assistants or officers in the civil service; and many bishops complained that they were training a bunch of 'inferior men' to the priesthood. In several of their CEPAC meetings, the Bishops' Conference of the Pacific, the possibility of married priests was suggested as one solution to make the ministry more relevant and more appealing to Islanders.

Subjects in most of the theological schools included theology, biblical studies, a general history of Christianity and ethics. Most colleges taught in the vernacular, and missionaries often had to translate books or write their own texts for their students. George Eastman at Rongorongo Training Institute, for instance, did several translations and wrote his own textbooks in the vernacular. Eastman's great works in the Gilbertese language include his three volumes of *Aron te Atua (Theology of God)* and *Te Nakoa ni Minita (Pastoral Theology)*.⁸ Some of the translated texts used in theological colleges before or during World War II, such as Scott's *Ethics in the New Testament*, still provide impressive reading today for contemporary theological students. Similar courses were offered in the Roman Catholic seminaries, though they concentrated more on dogmatic and liturgical subjects. In most of these colleges and seminaries, students were expected to 'learn' rather than to 'think' or be critical, and many students learnt their subjects almost by rote. And, although some missionaries introduced some aspects of biblical criticism in their classes, they were more likely to be passing remarks than 'notes' to be taken seriously. Of course, for most Islanders before World War II, the Bible was sacred and there was no way the biblical narratives could have erred or that the writers could have made grammatical mistakes.

For most Islanders, traditional ideas and stories of their ancestors belonged to their 'pagan' past and there was nothing of worth in them to learn from or to preserve. And, although several missionaries tried to find a place for them in their curriculum, they were usually not appreciated by the members of the church and met with great opposition from the locally ordained ministers. For most ministers of that era, if Christianity was to grow and flourish in the islands, it was better to forget the past and build a new identity on the teachings of the gospel. Some missionaries thought that there was a place for tradition and the past in Christian faith — one could be an Islander and a Christian — and they collected

myths and traditions and aspects of island cultures and published them at the mission press for their theological students. Sometimes students were involved in some of these 'cultural studies', collecting the traditional stories for the missionaries as part of their school projects.

After World War II, less time was spent outside the classroom and more time was concentrated on developing good theological training centres. Extra courses were added to the curriculum, though the major disciplines — theology and ethics, history and biblical studies — remained. Some theological colleges raised their entry level and accepted only those students that had completed their first three years at high school or had passed the junior secondary school level examinations. Several colleges, such as Lawes College in Papua, run by the Papua Ekalesia, were already getting their students to sit for the Melbourne College of Divinity examination papers at the diploma level. By the end of the 1950s, most island theological colleges were producing good 'theologically trained' ministers, while some of their former students were completing their theological studies in the US, Europe, Australia or New Zealand. But though many of these theological colleges had come a long way from their humble beginnings, the challenges of the changing Pacific Islands were still begging to be addressed. Somehow, in spite of all the changes, there was still something missing in the training of theological students.

Certainly, most theological colleges in the decade after World War II had become 'proper' theological schools, and many of them produced ministers and priests who knew exactly what was required of them by their 'faithful' members. Most of the ministers, for instance, could lead church services and preach good sermons, organise Bible study groups and lead discussions, deliver good speeches in public, provide counselling and support, organise church functions and fundraising activities, provide answers and defend their Christian faith, and many other 'religious' activities. In short, these

ministers and priests were experts in religion and in the affairs of their own church. It was this 'religious' and ecclesiastical relevancy that made all the theological colleges and seminaries irrelevant after the war. They were producing 'religious' people, whose foremost, if not entire, concerns were with their own religious community and the life of their own church — its teachings, its structures, its authority, and its growth and place in society. The colleges were still haunted and controlled by the Christian vision and mentality, a legacy of missionisation, which was exclusive and self-centred, authoritarian and definitive, apologetic, local and sectarian, and dogmatic and hierarchical. And most of them failed to realise that the ministers they were producing were no longer relevant but were simply 'acceptable' only to those who agreed with them.

Their religion was a closed religion and they had no place for anything that was not a part of *their* church. Their church was the centre of the world, and the world should listen to them, for they knew what was best for the world. Their church, especially for the Roman Catholic priests, was the only true church; and their members should be protected from members of other churches. All of the priests and ministers believed that other churches had a slightly false or twisted gospel, that their own ministry was the only true ministry.

Certainly, there is nothing new in rivalry and competition among the Christian churches; and the identity and the teachings of the individual churches are partly the reason for the continuing exclusivity of their ministries. For the Roman Catholic Church, for instance, which saw itself as the only apostolic church, recognition of the Protestant churches meant a betrayal of that identity and a denial of the doctrine of the apostolic succession, to a certain degree. For the Protestants, who regarded the Roman Catholics as blind 'papists', they saw themselves as defenders of the true gospel and biblical faith and they could not imagine having anything to do with 'those hypocrites' and perpetrators of falsity.

No doubt questions of identity and the teachings of the individual churches contributed to the character of the ministries that emerged; but it was really the policy of non-dependency of the metropolitan churches in Europe, America, Australia and New Zealand, the churches that supported the missions in the islands, that played a significant role in the kind of theological training and the character of the ministry of the various churches that emerged. For, although the end of the war saw a great influx of Christian mission personnel and a flow of funds into the island churches and missions, many overseas mission boards and churches were eager to see a greater participation by locals and an early establishment of an indigenous church. For the island churches, this meant a maintenance of their present membership or a policy of drastic expansion. Membership was vital to the island churches, for the church with a lot of members was not only more likely to have more influence, acquire more property and receive more support from the people, it was likely to have more sympathisers among those in authority and be financially stable. Non-dependency was a test of survival and the continuation of the particular church tradition that their elders had accepted. So every church wanted to maintain its numbers and, if possible, expand its membership by attracting members from other Christian churches.

Churches increased their activities in the islands in an attempt to keep their members and attract others to their churches.⁹ Protestant churches were very good at organising church activities that would keep their members busy and away from the activities of other churches; but the Roman Catholic Church was even better and their activities and festivals were more regular and more colourful than the Protestants'. The major Protestant festivals were limited to those related to Christ, the arrival of the gospel, and a few other functions, while the Roman Catholics had extra activities because there was always a saint who could be used as an excuse for a gathering or celebration. Regular surveys by the

churches were conducted to make sure that they were not losing members to other Christian groups, and questionnaires were sent to members, inquiring how best the church could be of service to them. Hence, proselytisation was considered the most important function of the church — to make as many converts and sympathisers as possible in order for the local churches to be self-sufficient and to be able to maintain and support their institution, its ideals and programs. Rivalry, sectarianism, and competition continued, mildly in some places and intensified elsewhere, and became the feature of church relations, though in an increasingly civilised and adroit manner, as churches were no longer in ‘total’ control as governments and laws were established. As a direct result of this ‘important function’ of the church, theological colleges and seminaries were expected to produce ‘great evangelists’, disputants and apologists to expand and defend their particular brand of Christianity.

Island societies that emerged after World War II were greatly influenced by this sectarian and exclusivist ministry. People of the same village or island became suspicious of one another, and they were more comfortable in the presence of people who belonged to their own church. In the workplace, heads of organisations and government departments were more likely to favour members of their own church to fill a vacancy or promotion than members of other churches. On several islands, villages have been divided by church affiliations, and many families have been broken up because of differing church allegiances. On islands or in villages where a certain church had become predominant, village or island matters were usually decided not by the village council of leaders or elders, but by the deacons or catechists in their church meeting. And, for many people in the islands, the acceptable way to introduce oneself is to give one’s name, the island from which one comes, and the church to which one belongs.¹⁰ The church has become a part of their identity.

By the mid-1960s, sectarian or church-centred theology was beginning to lose its place in the thinking of many leaders of the mainstream Christian churches. And, although in many of the theological colleges throughout the Pacific, young men and women were still being trained for a ministry that would suit their own church traditions, the type of theological education that produced sectarianism and radical proselytisation was no longer encouraged.

Ecumenism and Modern Theological Thinking in the Pacific

The ecumenical movement and modern theological thinking are two events that happened together in the Pacific. It was the ecumenical movement that made possible serious theological reflection by Islanders, and it was the attempt by several church leaders to find ways of looking at and addressing their modern or changing context that made the ecumenical movement possible in the islands. Their relation is so attached that it is like the egg-chicken relationship, where one cannot decide which comes first. And although one could say that both movements in the islands were greatly influenced by global Christianity, one could also say, as we have seen earlier, that the movements have their own island origin and story to tell.

Although the story of the ecumenical movement in the islands is usually recounted from the meeting of the missions and churches in Malua in 1961, it is really a part of the bigger ecumenical movement of the 20th century, which has its origins in the Edinburgh meeting of the World Missionary Conference in 1910.¹¹ The conference belonged to that struggle of the churches throughout the world, but mainly in the Western world, to find ways in which the gospel message would still make sense to the modern scientific and industrial society, as well as bring good news and not be a stumbling block to people of other faiths. The International Missionary Council, which was born out of the World Missionary

Conferences, and the London Missionary Society were the two main bodies behind the ecumenical movement in the islands. Other mission and ecumenical organisations were also involved or were interested, such as the World Council of Churches, to see that such a vision for the churches coming together was realised.

When the churches and missions gathered for their meeting at Malua Theological College at the end of April 1961, all the principal demoninations of Protestant Churches came — Anglicans, Congregationalists, Lutherans, Methodists and Presbyterians. The meeting was held for two weeks, at the end of which churches and missions made pledges to keep in touch with one another. A Continuation Committee was formed to facilitate this contact and Setareki Tuilovoni from the Methodist Church of Fiji was the first chairman; Vavae Toma, a member of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, was the first secretary. Through this Continuation Committee, a proposal for the establishment of an office to give form and continuity to the ecumenical movement was suggested. At the meeting of the churches and missions in Lifou in New Caledonia from May 25–June 7, 1966, the Pacific Conference of Churches came into being, when the churches and missions voted unanimously for the draft constitution on May 27.

As we have seen earlier, one of the most significant resolutions from the Malua conference was the possibility of establishing a Central Theological College to help the churches raise the level of theological education in the islands. A delegation from that conference met in Suva in May 1961. The committee understood that its mandate was to try to conceive a theological school that was not only of a higher standard than the level of the existing theological colleges of the individual island churches, but one that was ecumenical. A plan was drawn up for such a college and Suva was to be the site. There were several possible candidates for the principal and, after much difficulty with several people, Dr George A. F. Knight, a New Zealand Presbyterian teaching the Old Testament at

McCormick Seminary in Chicago, agreed to be the first principal of the college. The college was to be called the Pacific Theological College. In March 1965, the Archbishop of Canterbury laid the foundation stone. In 1966, the Pacific Theological College received its first students, most of them having completed three or four years in the theological colleges of their various churches.

The model for the curriculum at the college, when it started, followed very closely that of Western theological schools. Its Diploma of Theology program, and later its degree program, followed closely that of London University. To qualify for the diploma program, and later the Bachelor of Divinity degree program, one needed to complete a two-year program equivalent to the Licentiate in Theology of Melbourne College of Divinity. Certainly, the college looked impressive, and it raised the level of theological education in the Pacific. However, it was a Western university in the islands, and many church leaders later complained that students who came back from training there had certainly learnt a lot, but they did not fit in the islands. 'They impress us with their knowledge, but they confuse us and even destroy our faith', were some of the comments by Islanders.

The Roman Catholics, who did not join the ecumenical movement from the beginning, started their own seminary, the Pacific Regional Seminary, in 1973. The Regional Seminary was the Roman Catholic response to the challenge of quality theological education to meet the bigger challenge of a changing Pacific society. The Pacific Regional Seminary, however, lacked the academic and institutional freedom enjoyed by the Pacific Theological College, as it was very much controlled by the CEPAC bishops.

As many churches and Christian organisations joined the Pacific Conference of Churches, the kind of theological thinking that emerged into the 1970s was an ecumenical one, at least for the Protestant churches. With the Roman Catholic Church joining the Pacific Conference of Churches in 1976, nearly all mainstream churches were thinking ecumenically. And although much of the

style and form of the island ecumenism still reflected the influences of forces from beyond the Pacific, ecumenical thinking in the second half of the 1970s was indeed a very Pacific Island ecumenism, one that was intrinsically connected with the social and political movements and events that took place in the Pacific region. It was in many ways the point of convergence of different Christian ministries and of different ways of thinking, which tried to accommodate the changing patterns of life in the new environment of the Pacific Islands. And many church leaders embraced the ecumenical movement as a 'gift of the Spirit for the churches' for their ministry in the islands. For most leaders of mainstream Christian churches, the new axiom — to think ecumenically was the most Christian thing to do — was true and it replaced the sectarian and church-centred thinking of the past.

But while ecumenical thinking was embraced by many of the leading island thinkers, most church leaders also struggled to think ecumenically within the limits allowed them by their own church tradition. Their task was not made any easier by hardliners within their own churches, who saw their membership in the ecumenical movement as economic only; that is, they joined because of the financial benefits they could reap from the movement. Very often these hardliners, found in most of the island churches, were conservative ultra-orthodox and, though they had watered down their 'sectarianism', they still believed that the hope and future of the church remained in the literal application and understanding of church traditions and teachings. Although they were quite insignificant, and caused no serious threat to the ecumenical movement, according to Bishop Philemon Riti of the United Church of the Solomon Islands, 'They are important beacons to watch out for lest our ecumenism has ventured into the fragile domain of our brethren in the other camp.'¹²

While it is true to say that ecumenical thinking has been adopted as a perspective and a mandate for the actions of many

mainstream island churches, there remains a suspicion of the 'movement' by several church leaders. There was fear that the movement would create confusion and inaction or overreaction. And though the movement encouraged partnership, the smaller churches were always reluctant, for experience had shown them that it was the bigger partners that usually benefited, and they had no wish to be exploited or controlled by the larger churches. Therefore, many joined the ecumenical movement cautiously. For others, like the Congregational Christian Churches and Methodist Church in Samoa, joining the ecumenical movement meant a much closer relationship, a way of receiving one another, and of forgetting the enmity of the past. Most of the new religious groups did not join the Pacific Conference of Churches, and rarely did they ever apply for membership.

Most church leaders understood ecumenism not only as unity, that is church unity, but its other meaning: the unity of the whole Earth. Ecumenical theology, therefore, does not only mean a way of thinking that takes seriously the division of the church and respect for different traditions; it sees the whole Earth as the focus of its concern. By the beginning of the 1980s, with continuing nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands, following tests on other islands in earlier decades, the ecumenical perspective in the islands took environmental issues seriously, reduced man from the crown of creation to an ordinary creature among other creations of God, and looked beyond history for the future of island society.¹³ Island ecumenism 'is concerned not only for our member Churches, but about the whole people of God, the whole of humanity. It reflects the New Jerusalem, the climax of God's fullness.'¹⁴ Of course, eschatology has always been a part of the thinking of many island church leaders, however, in the 1981 Assembly of the Pacific Conference of Churches, it was universally accepted and expressed as the theological position within ecumenical thinking.

Constant reform of the churches was also one of the things emphasised in this new island ecumenism.¹⁵ Like all new things

or movements, there was always the possibility of people misunderstanding the new 'thing' or using it to their advantage. Micronesian and Melanesian leaders, for instance, sometimes complain that the ecumenical movement is really a movement that benefits the Polynesian churches — most of the staff in its Suva office are from Polynesia, many of the Polynesian ministers are receiving opportunities to travel and work abroad, and more Polynesians than others are getting funds for their church projects and for further training of their ministers. Some individuals, because they were bishops in their own churches, seemed to want to stay forever on the important committees of the Pacific Conference of Churches, attempting to run the whole movement like it was their church. Some leaders felt that the theological positions of some churches had controlled the trend of the ecumenical movement and the theological thinking of many young ministers.

The Pacific Theological College continued to play a significant role in the development of the theological thinking of Islanders. It continued to provide leaders and lecturers for many of the churches and local theological colleges, but more importantly, it was a place where students from the various local colleges could test their own theological thinking and understanding on similar issues or compare cultural understandings and approaches to doctrinal teachings or theological problems with students from other parts of the Pacific, which belong to different churches. And because the Pacific Theological College wanted to maintain its level of academic excellence, relevancy for the college went beyond what the church leaders had wanted. Certainly, the Pacific Theological College produced many young men and women who were more aware of the island context and in a much better position to address particular contexts in their various islands; but it also produced graduates who were more interested in asking questions than receiving answers to problems and issues, even questions that made

many people uncertain about their Christian faith. In defending their approach, the principal of the Pacific Theological College made it clear to the churches during the South Pacific Theological Consultation in 1978 (January 10–17) that relevancy in their understanding meant also intellectual relevancy:

While the founders of the College were rightly concerned that the College programme be oriented to the Pacific and its needs, they wisely did not limit the pursuit of knowledge to the relevant and useful. Such limitations could only hinder the service of the College to the churches. For the college also has a responsibility to create new knowledge, and to stimulate original and seminal thought.

Truly original and creative thought is most often generated by simple curiosity, and is arrived at in a mood of relaxed intellectual play, rather than under the pressure to solve problems and answer questions. The PTC is intended to be a centre for such activity. Students, and staff, are encouraged to pursue knowledge that is not immediately useful, or which does not have to meet the test of relevance.

Original and creative work may require special resources. The PTC is located in Suva, where a multitude of such resources is available ... The PTC is also at work on establishing an archives for the records of the church in the Pacific. This will be a great asset to put at the disposal of the Pacific Churches.¹⁶

Of course, there were a number of church leaders who were not convinced that that was the mandate of the college in the minds of those who conceived the idea of a central theological college at Malua in 1961. For several of the church leaders, the Pacific Theological College has not only successfully anchored them in the realities of the new environment, it has made them, the churches, an intrinsic part of secular society. For some, the Pacific Theological

College has become another ordinary tertiary institute, a place that offers theological education at a tertiary level for anyone interested in doing theology, a place for theological experimentation. And, at the Assembly of the Pacific Conference of Churches in 1981, many voices were raised against the aloofness and arrogant theological perspectives of many graduates of the Pacific Theological College.¹⁷

The Assembly of the Pacific Conference of Churches in Tonga in 1981 was perhaps the most important conference for the life and the theological thinking of the island Christians, after the Malua meeting of 1961. Apart from the fact that it was a conference that saw for the first time a huge number of women (more than 120), and Protestants and Roman Catholics being involved in a church gathering, it also saw for the first time island church leaders, including the Roman Catholics, and intellectuals of different Christian traditions, sitting down together and discussing theology and its implications in the islands. Certainly, in the discussion panels and reports, there were different opinions, but there were also major agreements.¹⁸

No particular theological position was adopted, though there was a general consensus that theology was an illustration or a statement of an analysis of human relationships (which includes church relations) and human situations in which God or the truth could be revealed. In other words, a truly Christian theology for the Islanders is one that begins with the people and their context; and any theology or theological thinking that does not start with a human relationship, and does not address or deal with the real human situation in the islands, cannot be called Christian theology.¹⁹ Certainly, the gospel would be the final test for all theologies, but there was a significant shift: human relationships and context were now the centre or the beginning of theology instead of the church and her traditions and teachings. Of course, the Pacific Conference of Churches was not a super-church, and it had no authority over its members to ask them to accept any

consensus that came about in any of its meetings, but everyone thought that the consensus reached at Nuku'alofa in 1981 was a convergence that was agreeable with the spirit of ecumenism and the concern for the islands.

And it was from this consensus that island theological educators and theologians were asked to seek such 'illustrations of' or 'statements about' the hidden-ness of God in the real lives of the Islanders. Certain themes for a Pacific theology, such as the 'the sovereignty of God' and 'God in relation to the community', were also suggested, but it was 'Amanaki Havea's 'coconut theology' that became the first of many serious attempts by Islanders to construct a genuinely 'Pacific theology'.²⁰

Throughout the 1980s, all sorts of theological reflections about or interpretations of the island way of life and Pacific realities emerged, and all sorts of symbols were used to illustrate these human relationships and experiences in the new Pacific: there was the canoe, the outrigger, the pandanus, the ta'ovala, the kava, the sea, the land, the gap, grassroots, migration, celebration, and many others. Of course, there had been theological reflections by students at the Pacific Theological College prior to the 1980s, but those reflections were mostly applications of universal or foreign ideas to the life of the churches in the islands. The theological thinking of the 1980s was really about attempts at constructing theological ideas based on the cultural and contemporary or life experiences of the people.

From a theology that was sectarian or Church-centred to one that was contextual and centred on people or the world, theological thinking in the islands has travelled from one pole to another. And although the context of the islands from the end of the 1950s — the growing insecurity and uncertainty of the people, the emerging gap between rich and poor, the rise in crime and growing hardship — began this movement or shift in theological thinking, it was really the ecumenical movement that was the main

impetus behind the move away from that sectarian and church-centred thinking. In the ecumenical thinking, survival was no longer found in 'survival of the fittest' but in cooperation and partnership; and Christian truth was no longer convincing by forcing it onto the world but by being in the world and sharing in the life experiences of the people. The Church and her theology were no longer the end but were the means to discern the reality of God in the islands.

Footnotes

- 1 'Christendom thinking', with its emphasis on militant proselytisation, while very much a feature of the 'old theological thinking' up to World War II, aspects of it are still present in the theological thinking of many Christians within the mainstream churches, though it is now more common to find this type of thinking with the new religious groups in the islands. See Rex Kaikuyawa, 'Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement and the United Church: The Clash of Two Types of Christianity and Its Impact on the United Church Adherents 1968–1998', MTh thesis, Pacific Theological College (Suva, 2001); Ulises Sala, 'An Attempt to do a Pacific Theology', *Pacific Journal of Theology*, 2: 16 (1996); Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Change: Rapid Growing Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands* (Suva, 1994).
- 2 Pastor Kaneti, Tarawa, personal communication, January 12, 1994.
- 3 Papauta and Rongorongo had girls trained to be wives of ministers. Missionaries very often matched the students, who should marry whom, before the young ministers were posted to their new parishes. Often parents had very little to say about the marriage of their children.
- 4 In some churches, old ministers who were still fit and strong enough to continue in the ministry were required to go back to the theological college to do a 'refresher course', to help their ministry in a changed environment.
- 5 I will not be surprised if Moulton's work is the background of Atensi Institute in Tonga, which is quite steeped in Greek philosophy.
- 6 Charles A. Scott, *Te Ethics n Te Nu Tetemanti Are Taekan Te Maiu ae Raoiroi*, (trans. by A. L. Sadd from *New Testament Ethics*) (Rongorongo, 1942).
- 7 See International Missionary Council, *Report of the Theological Education in the Pacific, Suva, May 7–13, 1961* (London, 1961).
- 8 George Eastman, *Aron te Atua* (Christian theology) (Rongorongo, 1930). Eastman's other works include *Ana Makuri Ni Kamaiu te Atua i Nanon Iesu Kristo are te Tia Kamaiu* ('*God's Work of Redemption Through Jesus Christ the Redeemer: A Textbook for Students*') (Rongorongo, 1923); *Ana Taetae ni Kaikonaki Iesu* ('*The Parables of Jesus*') (Rongorongo, 1941); *Ana Reta Bauru nakoia I-Rom* ('*Commentary of Paul's Epistle to the Romans*') (Rongorongo, 1936).
- 9 In fact, today most visitors to the islands would be treated to more festivities organised by churches than by any other organisation or institution.
- 10 Visitors to the islands sometimes find it odd and a bit embarrassing when asked to declare what church they belong to when introducing themselves at village gatherings.
- 11 See R. Rouse and S. C. Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517–1948* (London, 1967); Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the*

Twentieth Century (Cambridge, 1994) for further discussion of the missionary and ecumenical movement. For a detailed study of the ecumenical movement through the history of the Pacific Conference of Churches, see Charles W. Forman, *The Voice of Many Waters: The Life and Ministry of the Pacific Conference of Churches in the Last 25 Years* (Suva, 1986).

- 12 Bishop Philemon Riti, personal communication, November 15, 1996.
- 13 PCC, *Report of the Fourth Assembly* (Suva, 1981), pp. 130–5.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 213.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 197ff.
- 16 *Report of the South Pacific Consultation on Theological Education, Papauta, January 10–17, 1978*, p. 46
- 17 PCC, *Report of the Fourth Assembly*, pp. 215, 217.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 27–30.
- 19 *Ibid.*, pp. 233ff.
- 20 See Kambati K. Uriam, *Theology and Practice*, especially chapter 7, for more details of Havea's Coconut Theology. These two possible themes were suggested by Charles Forman.

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