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Glossary

'aiga	extended family
faife'au	pastor
fiva Niugini	malaria
matai	Samoan chief
tambu	shell money

2

Errand of Mercy:

Samoan Missionaries to Southern Vanuatu, 1839-1860

Featuna'i Liua'ana

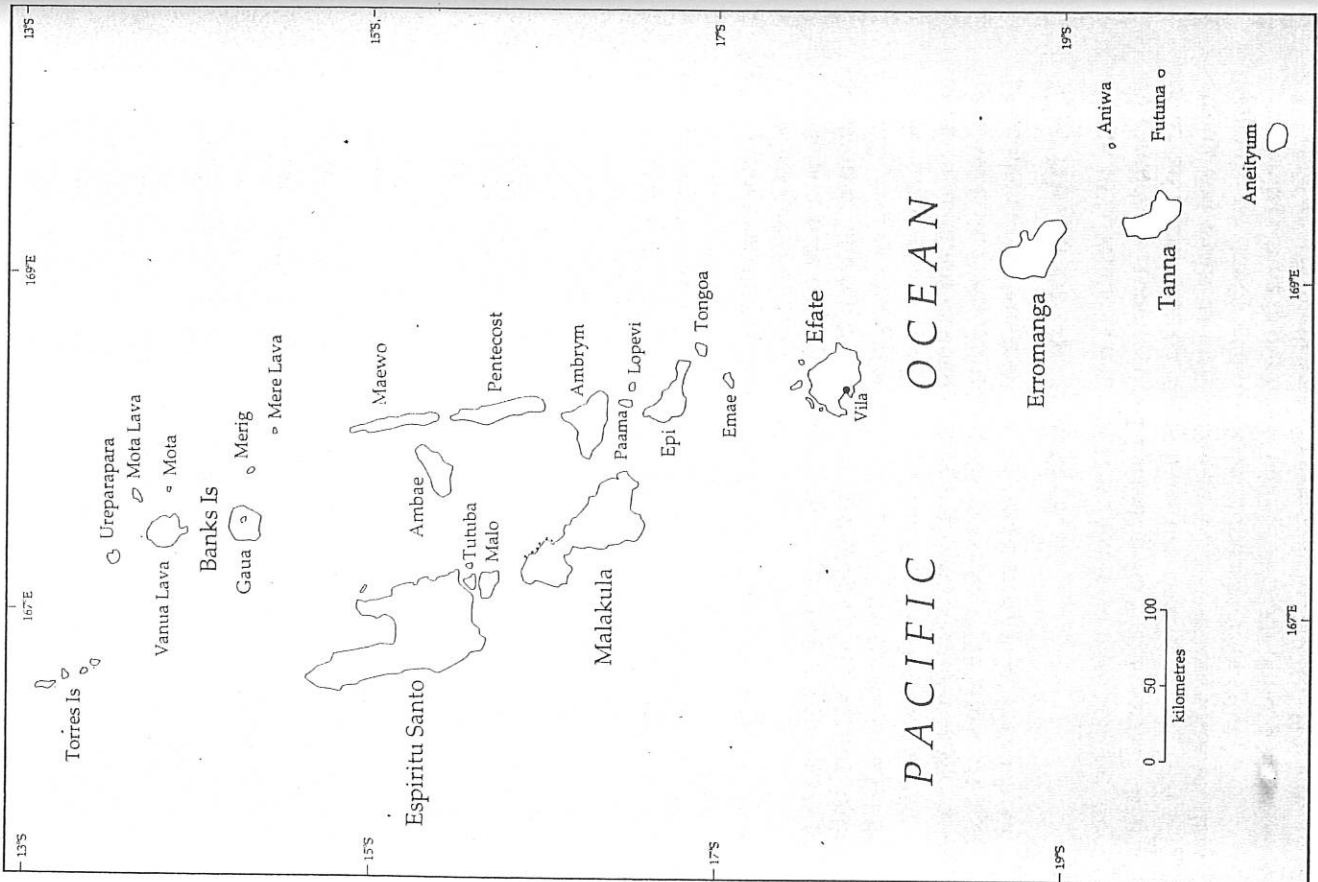
John Williams, of the London Missionary Society (LMS), introduced Christianity to Samoa in 1830. Central to the success of the Samoan enterprise were missionaries from the Cook Islands and Tahiti. The Samoans flocked to the mission for knowledge and material wealth. Samoan matai (chiefs), such as Malietoa, To'oa, Matetau, Lavasi'i, Pe'a' and Taegogo (who later became an LMS missionary) and their families, were early prominent LMS adherents. It was from such chiefly families that most of the pioneer Samoan missionaries originated. John Williams believed Samoans could succeed in mission work just as the Tahitians and Cook Islanders had done.

This article examines the work of Samoan missionaries on Aneityum, Futu'a, Tanna, Aniwa, Erromanga and Efate during the first 20 years of evangelization. Although the emphasis is on the work of the Samoans, other island missionaries are mentioned in order to maintain a coherent story. The difficult task is trying to trace who the Samoan missionaries were, their home villages, mission stations, length of service, and outcomes of their labour.

The blood of the martyrs...

In 1839, Williams selected 12 Samoans for mission work from 30 candidates recommended by European missionaries.² Many other Samoans offered themselves personally; young and old, strong and weak, as well as the afflicted. William Mills recalled Sepetaia, an elderly matai, offering himself for mission:

Whilst sitting in our house talking over our plans, a blind chief who is intelligent and a good man came in. He said, "Teacher Mills and Williams you know I am a blind man but I have a good desire to go with you to the dark lands



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- perhaps my being blind will make them pity me and not kill me, and whilst I can talk to them and tell them of Jesus, here is my boy ... he can teach and write, so we can teach them" (Mills to Ellis, 3 Apr 1840, SSL).

Sepetaia indirectly alerted Williams of the dangers involved. Williams, however, was so overwhelmed by Sepetaia's blindness and zeal that he failed to heed the accompanying caution.

After the designation service for the Samoan missionaries, the *Camden* left on 6 November, 1839. The *Camden* called at Rotuma to locate an interpreter for the Melanesian undertaking, but a suitable person could not be found (Williams 1839). A Rotuman on the *Camden* requested Samoan missionaries to remain on his island, and Lei'ataua and Sa'u took up their abode with chief Tokainua at Oinafa (Hardie to Ellis, 3 Nov 1839, SSL). The *Camden* arrived in southern Vanuatu and left three Samoans on Tanna before continuing north to Erromanga. Williams was either over-confident or ignorant when he decided to go ashore before the Erromangans had approached the *Camden*. Williams, Captain Morgan, Cunningham (the ship's mate), James Harris (a layman on a sightseeing trip), and some of the crew went ashore. Captain Morgan noticed the absence of women and children, and perceived the situation as dangerous. Williams took no notice of Captain Morgan's remark and moved towards the Erromangans. Without warning, Williams and Harris were attacked and killed as they tried to reach the safety of the mission boats. Many Europeans suggested that Melanesian 'savageness' motivated the attack. Others blamed the mistreatment of Melanesians by European traders and sailors as the cause. However, Williams' lack of perception and over-confidence also contributed to his death; the last few entries in his journal do not indicate any sense of fear. The good reception on Rotuma and Tanna may have given Williams a false impression of Melanesian hospitality.

The *Camden* arrived in Samoa with the news of Williams' death. Seven stunned Samoan missionaries³ on board had come to grips with the dangerous reality of missionary work. The news of Williams' death sent shock waves across the Pacific and the world. A Samoan went out to meet the *Camden* and when told of Williams' death, "his paddle dropped from his hands into the water, as if he had been shot" (Murray 1840; see also Murray 1876:145; Lundie 1846:79). Malietoa Vai'inupo - the man who had received Williams and the gospel in 1830 - went to offer Mrs Williams

comfort. When he saw her, he beat his chest and burst into tears. During church services that followed, the Samoans wept, calling out "Aue! Viliamu, Aue! Viliamu."⁴ The European missionaries reminded the Samoans of their obligation to Williams and the Samoans became more determined to return to southern Vanuatu. The old adage - "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the gospel!" - was lifted to new heights. It was, perhaps, the strong insistence of the Samoans that inspired the European missionaries to resume mission fervour. According to Turner, the decision to continue provided "proof ... of the forgiving spirit of Christianity, and of the unflinching determination of the friends of the Saviour to carry out his dying command; however much opposed by Satan and his heathen servants" (Turner 1861:3).

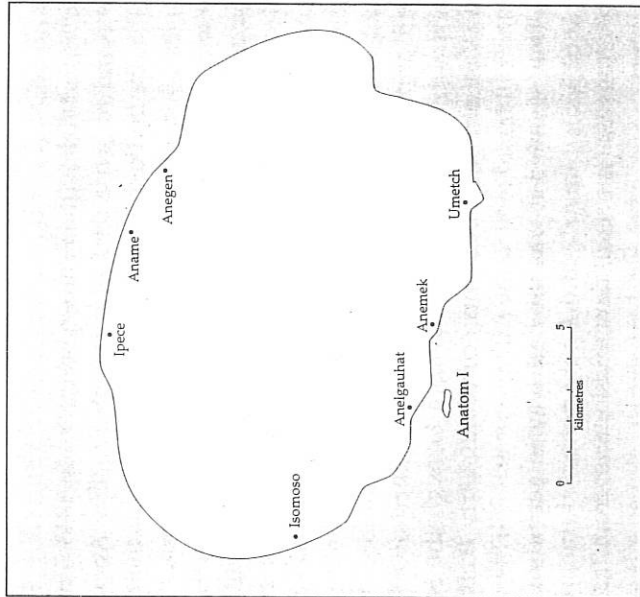
Thomas Heath and Teava, a Cook Islands missionary, were appointed to visit the Samoans left on Rotuma and Tanna, and to "attempt to occupy new grounds", preferably Aniwa and New Caledonia.⁵ Heath reluctantly accepted the task and called upon his colleagues to follow him if he should fail. The Samoans chosen understood the danger they were facing. Murray summed up the feeling.

Our friends were indeed going forth as lambs in the midst of wolves. And they were going alone, leaving behind them their wives and children, and all that on earth they held dear; bidding what might very probably prove a final farewell to all.... They seemed to realize pretty fully their circumstances but they bore up wonderfully (Murray 1876:150-51).

It was the beginning of many years of struggle for the Samoan missionaries. They encountered a very different world, and people of very different skin colours, kinships, languages, customs and cultures, traditions and religious practices. On 24 April 1840, the *Camden* left for "her lofty errand of mercy", the phrase used by Murray (1876:151) as Heath and the Samoans departed for Melanesia.

Aneityum

Aneityum, also known as Annatom, is the southern most island of Vanuatu. The people spoke different languages from those of their neighbours. They worshipped ancestral spirits especially when sickness occurred, strangled widows to accompany the dead to the spirit world, committed polygamy, and practised



ANEITYUM

circumcision. The Samoan missionaries arrived on Aneityum in 1841.⁷ The chief Kotiama (or Kautiama), from Futuna, acted as interpreter. He was closely related to the people of Ipece. At first the Aneityumese were reluctant to communicate with the European missionaries but, in seeing Kotiama, they boldly approached the ship. Kotiama relayed to them the purpose of the *Camden's* visit. They became interested and chief Yata (or Iata) agreed to receive Tavita and Fuata'iese as missionaries among his people.

The Samoans struggled among the people, with their lives in constant danger. However, their biggest hurdle was working together harmoniously. The Samoans quarrelled and Fuata'iese left Aneityum, while Tavita moved to another part of the island.⁸ In 1842, a missionary deputation found Fuata'iese on Tanna. He was reprimanded and returned to Samoa. Tavita, on the other hand, was allowed to remain on Aneityum. Simeona, Apolo,⁹ and their wives, joined Tavita at Ipece. The people at Ipece had been good to the Samoans and were happy to receive them again. However, doubts about the suitability of the Samoans for missionary work began to surface. Turner felt the Samoans were not well educated, and their faith had not been tested (Crocombe and Crocombe

1968:24).

Death soon visited the Samoan brethren. In 1843, Tavita died of dropsy, and his wife died of tuberculosis. The Aneityumese insisted that the bodies be thrown into the sea, as was their custom. Nevertheless, Simeona and Apolo persuaded the Aneityumese to give Tavita and his wife land burials. Simeona and Apolo found it hard to master the language, then to come to terms with a very different culture and its complicated customs (Turner 1984:365). In 1843, Simeona and Apolo had to deal with a critical problem, namely the missionary refugees who had been driven from Tanna in January 1843 (Murray 1863:31-32). The Aneityumese felt burdened and complained about the presence of additional missionaries. An epidemic had ravaged through the islands of southern Vanuatu and food was scarce. A party from Futuna arrived soon after and incited the Aneityumese to kill Simeona and Apolo. They claimed it was the best way to get rid of diseases (Turner 1861:365). Simeona and Apolo remained unharmed and the hasty removal of the redundant missionaries from Tanna eased the hostilities.

Simeona and Apolo made slow progress and gathered only a few people for instructions. They could not get regular attendants for Sunday services except for an elderly chief named Umra. According to Simeona, the infrequent visits of the mission ship caused many to withdraw. Simeona told Murray in 1845 that "the greater part had drawn back, influenced, as they said, by a suspicion that the teachers were abandoned and would not again be visited" (Murray 1863:29). It was particularly hard to get the children to attend school. The parents forced Simeona and Apolo to close the school because the parents feared their children were becoming wiser than them. However, a few parents remained loyal and allowed Simeona and Apolo to instruct their children privately (Turner 1984:366). Simeona and Apolo also strongly opposed such unchristian customs as the strangling of women and cannibalism. Many times they risked their own lives to save women from strangling. When a chief died in February 1845, the people wanted to kill Simeona and Apolo for a 'weeping feast'. It was a custom to slaughter strangers upon the death of a person as food for the 'weeping feast'. The victims' plantation was also seized for the feast (Turner 1861:365-6). Fortunately, Simeona and Apolo talked the people out of their intention.

When Turner and Murray visited Aneityum in 1845, they found

the work done by Simeona and Apolo thriving. Compared to the appalling conditions of the neighbouring islands, Murray described Aneityum as "a gleam of light ... amid the dense darkness" (Murray 1876:230). Murray acknowledged that it was not an easy task for the Samoans. He remarked, "their trials were many and great, and not seldom, their lives were in imminent peril; yet they were preserved, and enabled to struggle on till brighter days dawned. Before that, however, the mission was brought to the very edge of extinction" (Murray 1863:31). Simeona and Apolo travelled and visited various villages on Aneityum, and many chiefs expressed interest in receiving missionaries. Simeona, accompanied by Umra, guided Murray and Turner to Anelgauhah to meet a chief named Nohoat. Simeona had met Nohoat through Murphy, a European sandalwood collector, who occupied a sandbank island near Anelgauhah. He had bought the island, presumably from Nohoat, with an axe, a ring, and a string of beads. The people of Anelgauhah believed spirits haunted the island. Nohoat belonged to a group of powerful sacredmen. He was a 'disease-maker' and very much feared by the people (Turner 1861:368-69).

Nohoat was amazed that Turner could speak Tannese.¹⁰ Turner witnessed to Nohoat about immortality, heaven, hell, sin and salvation. However, Turner's boat captured the interest of Nohoat rather than the message of the gospel. Nohoat agreed to receive Samoan missionaries and promised to provide land, build a house, protect and supply food. Umra did not think Nohoat's commitment was enough and pointed out to Nohoat that the most important thing was to attend to the word of God. Simeona moved to Anelgauhah with Poti. Apaisa went to Ipece to assist Apolo.¹¹ A year later, in 1846, hostility and constant intimidations threatened the survival of the mission. Simeona and Poti left Anelgauhah and joined their brethren in Ipece. The Samoans from Tanna also retreated to Ipece and all demanded passages back to Samoa. Gill and Nisbet saw Simeona as the only hope of keeping the mission open. They remarked to Simeona, "what a pity it is to leave this fine place without a teacher, and let go our hold upon the island. What would you think of staying and giving it another trial?" (Murray 1863:32). Simeona agreed to stay only if another Samoan also remained. Pita, one of the missionaries from Tanna, agreed to work with Simeona until reinforcements arrived.¹² The rest of the missionaries, including Apolo, Apaisa, and Poti, returned to their home islands.

Simeona and Pita held out well during the years that followed. Tribal wars were frequent and the massacre of European sailors and traders continued. Simeona and Pita struggled to regain the confidence of the people, especially Nohoat. A few people attended worship services on Sunday. Simeona and Pita also found it harder to curb unchristian practices. At one stage, they stopped encouraging the Aneityumese to bury their dead. The people had formed the belief that buried bodies went to heaven and bodies thrown into the sea went to hell. Simeona and Pita tried unsuccessfully to explain to the Aneityumese that the method of disposing of dead bodies did not determine life after death (Turner 1861:433-34).

The Europeans missionaries had questioned the effectiveness of the Samoans as missionaries after they threatened to withdraw from Aneityum. Murray commented that, "the day was at hand when the Aneityum mission was to be taken up by more effective agents" (Murray 1863:33-4). On 14 July 1848, John Geddie, Isaac Archibald and Thomas Powell arrived in Anelgauhau to oversee the work in Aneityum.¹³ Geddie, in a strong reproach, remarked that Simeona and Pita had not brought the people to feel the saving influence of the gospel and regarded the work done by them as a "holding operation" only.¹⁴ It was harsh criticism from someone "e leai sona taeao" (literally, "one without a morning", which refers to someone new to a place who makes criticisms without first observing and experiencing the new surroundings). When Murray and Hardie visited on 31 August 1849, Geddie and his fellow European missionaries had made little progress. They had all suffered from sickness and, for about a year, had no effect on the mission. Powell returned to Samoa on 26 October 1849 sick and unable to contend with difficulties, while immorality drove Archibald to his downfall (Miller 1875:55-7; Murray 1876:264-5). Simeona carried out the bulk of the work until Geddie and the others could work effectively, especially after Pita had returned to Tanna in 1848.

Geddie settled in Anelgauhau as it was the healthiest of the stations occupied by the Samoans. The mission constantly faced hostility from the people. The European missionaries did not help matters by having a very negative impression of the Aneityumese, and being ignorant of their customs (Miller 1975:32-7). Nathaue, another chief of Anelgauhau, expressed to Simeona his displeasure of the European missionaries' failure to observe their taboos and customs. Nathaue remarked that the people were planning to burn the mission houses and drive out the missionaries. Simeona

approached Geddie and explained the imminent danger they faced if ignorance on their part continued. Simeona, Geddie and Nathaue settled things peacefully. Such incidents could have been avoided if only Geddie had the modesty to confide in Simeona. The incident did change Geddie's attitude slightly. Simeona became Geddie's right hand - in interpretation, physical work, as cultural adviser and companion. Sadly, Geddie never regarded Simeona as a missionary in his own right (Miller 1975:37-57; Miller nd:75; Murray 1863:37-41).

A new mission station was opened at Aname near Ipece. Simeona, Umra, and two other Samoans, made contact with the villagers to ascertain whether it was safe for European missionaries to land. Umra and Simeona acted as interpreters. Yata pledged to receive two Cook Islands missionaries, Poaripo and Abetaiah, for Aname (Turner 1861:435-7). Further missionary visitation around the island, in 1848, led to positive responses from chiefs of Ithumu (or Idumio), Umej (or Umetah), An-nau-unjai, and An-nau-unse (Miller 1975:33-4). The missionaries were reshuffled. Munumunu, who lived at Anelgauhau since arriving from Samoa, went to Umej. Pita, stationed at Ipece, was relocated to Ithumu, while Poaripo and Abetaiah minded An-nau-unjai and An-nau-unse stations, respectively. Akuila, a Samoan who arrived on Aneityum as a servant, assisted Abetaiah.¹⁵

There was an epidemic on the island in 1849, and the Samoans suffered greatly. In Anelgauhau, the people showed no kindness towards the Samoans, but only expressed joy that they were sick (Miller 1975:47-8). At Umej, the chief lost a grandchild in the epidemic and, according to customs, life and property had to be destroyed. The villagers strangled two women and burnt down Munumunu's house. At the time, Munumunu was recovering from illness at Anelgauhau. Munumunu later replaced Pita at Ithumu when Pita returned to Tanna in 1848 (Nisbet 1848; Miller 1975:48-59). In 1850, the new missionaries to Aneityum, a Samoan named Pita,¹⁶ and two Cook Islanders, Peleasaro and Kuka, and their wives, suffered greatly from another fever epidemic. The unsuited conditions and environment may have prompted Geddie to relocate Peleasaro on Tanna which was short of missionaries due to a similar fatal epidemic (Miller 1975:65-70).

Munumunu's wife died of fever in 1851, leaving two children (Miller 1975:84, 90-102). Soon after, the Ithumu people burnt down the mission house. The people blamed Christianity for the death

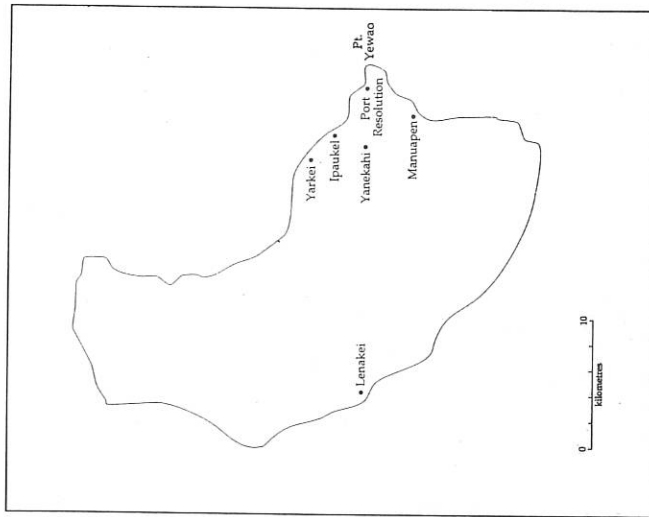
of a woman who had become a confessed Christian. Munumunu left, even after Karamanu, an influential chief in Ithumu, had assured him of his safety. Munumunu went to Ipece and stayed with Amosa.¹⁷ A further appeal and assurance from Karamanu eventually persuaded Munumunu to return to Ithumu. Towards the end of 1851, the people of Anelgauhahat attempted to burn down the mission house in their village. Munumunu and Sakaio caught one of the culprits, named Thero, and set about inflicting physical justice on him when Geddie interfered and spared his life (Murray 1863:72; Miller 1975:106; Garrett 1985:170). Sakaio, who had arrived from Tanna in 1850 due to illness, replaced Kuka, who had died of fever, at Umej. Yiapai, the chief, protected Sakaio and provided him with some sacred land to build a house. The chief and people showed their commitment to Christianity by cutting and clearing the sacred land for Sakaio's plantation. Such defiance of religion and of spirits usually resulted in death.¹⁸ Perhaps, Yiapai wanted to test the god of the new religion against their traditional gods and spirits.

By the end of 1853, Geddie had become increasingly central in the administration of the Aneityum mission. Large numbers of people attended church regularly. The response to the schools was also encouraging. The first church on Aneityum had been formed on 13 May 1852, and the Aneityumese celebrated Holy Communion for the first time. Three Samoan missionaries and 15 Aneityumese worked with Geddie at Anelgauhahat during this period.¹⁹ During the same time, several great names in the Aneityum mission passed away. Nohoat died in 1859 (Murray 1863:123-6), and Namuri, a man of no rank and considered to be the first convert of Aneityum, passed away in 1862. Namuri confided in John Paton his admiration for the missionaries, including the Samoans. "I am not afraid to die.... You speak to me just like Mr. Geddie and Simeona, and Peter [Pita],²⁰ and your word is like theirs, and brings all things to my mind that they told me long ago" (Murray 1863:128). Namuri was buried next to Vasa, a Samoan missionary who died on Tanna in 1846.

In 1860, the finest Samoan missionary to southern Vanuatu, Simeona, died of measles (Garrett 1985:172). The epidemic devastated Aneityum, Erromanga and Tanna. Simeona had returned briefly to Samoa, in 1849, for further studies at Malua. He returned to Aneityum where he laboured until his death. He was the last Samoan missionary to serve there. Geddie's writings never really

gave him the credit that he deserved. He never acknowledged Simeona's contribution to the success of the Aneityum mission. Geddie's tribute to a great individual only took a few lines, when he wrote that Simeona's "life was that of a Christian, and his latter end was peace" (Miller 1975:261). A simple tribute for a plain, but lofty, missionary of whom we know only too little.

Tanna



TANNA

When Samoan missionaries arrived at Tanna in 1839 they found that Tanna, also known as Eueronan or Apopapa, had no paramount chiefs or kings. Each village had an orator and can belong to different districts, depending on their status in times of war. The men went around armed and in constant readiness for war. Tannese practiced polygamy and cannibalism. There were no idols on Tanna. The real gods were the sacredmen known as rain-makers, thunder-makers, fly and mosquito-makers and disease-makers. The disease-makers were the most powerful and most feared of all the sacredmen. The women had their meals apart from the men. The Tannese attributed all coughs, influenza, dysentery and skin diseases to Europeans, and referred to these ailments as "foreign

things" (Heath 1840; Murray 1841; Turner 1842-43, 1861:81-91).

Samoa missionaries, Mose, Lalolagi, and Salamea (or Salomea), began work at Port Resolution, Tanna, on 18 November, 1839. They received a warm and very friendly reception. Williams introduced the three Samoans as "chiefs of God".²¹ The three Samoans were happy at the prospect of working among the Tannese, especially as they felt welcome. When Heath visited Tanna in 1840 he found they had persevered well under great stress, but had failed to master the language. Nevertheless, the Samoans made a little progress to give the mission some promise for the future. Lalolagi expressed the desire to return to Samoa but was persuaded to stay one more year. Pomare and Vaiofaga joined their three Samoan brethren; reinforcing the mission on Tanna.²² Six weeks later, an epidemic raged through the island. The Samoans were so ill that they could not help each other in their afflictions. Pomare and Salamea both died despite the efforts of Tannese friends (Murray 1863:139). Many Tannese refused to accept Christianity after the epidemic. They attributed the epidemic to the greatness of their god Alema. They believed Alema was displeased with the Christian religion and the failure of the Christian God to prevent the deaths of Pomare and Salamea proved that Alema was stronger (Heath 1840; Murray 1863:140, 1885:131).

The Samoans only just managed to subsist after the Tannese abandoned them. This resulted in less time spent propagating the gospel. When Murray visited in 1841, Vaiofaga and Lalolagi told of the great hardship they had suffered. The wives and children of Pomare and Salamea had travelled on the *Camden* to join their husbands, only to accompany their dead bodies back home. The Samoans were ready to leave Tanna, but Vaiofaga and Mose agreed to stay following fresh commitments of support from the Tannese. Fale'ese and Apolo reinforced the mission on Tanna, while Lalolagi returned to Samoa.²³ George Turner, Henry Nisbet, and Kapao, a Cook Islander, joined the Samoans at Port Resolution in 1842. The newly arrived missionaries found Tanna "unhealthy, the people great thieves, and constantly at war" (Turner 1984:4; Buzacott 1866:164-7). The Tannese were on edge after recent acts of terror and atrocity by the crew of a United States trading vessel. They had fired on the people with guns, then committed immoral acts on the Tannese before departing. Surprised, Turner and Nisbet found the Samoans safe, an indication of the confidence and friendship the Samoans had established. The arrival of European

missionaries probably prompted the relocation of Fale'ese in 1842. Fale'ese and his wife assisted Iona on Aniwa.²⁴

The Samoans had not mastered the language when Turner and Nisbet arrived, but they knew enough to communicate with the Tannese. They had also learnt to stay within the safe boundaries of the mission and visit only those whom they knew and trusted. The new European missionaries wanted the boundary of the mission extended inland to Volcano Valley but not one native was willing to take them there; they were frightened they would be killed. One of the Samoan missionaries, probably Vaiofaga, guided Turner and Nisbet to Iarofi with the hope of acquiring a good guide, but for similar reasons they refused to help. The missionary party went on to Ratobus where the people threatened to kill them. Vaiofaga talked with the Ratobus people and, after a lengthy conversation, they spared the visitors. Wisely, the missionary party returned to the safety of Port Resolution (Turner 1984:19-21).

The arrival of Turner and Nisbet revitalized the mission as many people flocked for instruction. However, the fervour for Christianity was short lived. The mission began to receive plenty of opposition from the priesthood, a band of very powerful individuals. These men saw much of their influence being taken away by the missionaries, and sought every opportunity to dispose of them (Murray 1863:142). Towards the end of 1842 a dysentery epidemic hit Tanna, and the Tannese, led by chief Yata, found the excuse to inflict harm upon the missionaries. The great number of deaths had fuelled their anger. The people blamed the recent arrivals, Turner and Nisbet, for the epidemic. However, those friendly to the missionaries remained loyal and were willing to protect the missionaries at all costs (Turner 1984:24-32, 41; Murray 1863:31-2, 143, 178).

The missionaries had a gun that their Tannese friends insisted they use on their enemies, but the European missionaries refused, insisting on remaining neutral and solving the conflict through peaceful means. The passiveness of the missionaries disappointed the friendly Tannese who had anticipated the missionaries would fight. The Tannese again requested the gun and appealed for a Samoan missionary to discharge it, but the European missionaries remained firm. A brief encounter took place and the friends of the mission suffered great injuries. The Tannese could no longer guarantee the safety of the missionaries and it was decided to leave to prevent any loss of life. Psalm 46 was read, followed by a hymn

and a prayer, before the party of 19 people, including 4 children, left Tanna at midnight (Turner 1861:42-50). They made their way out to sea but a strong wind drove them back to Port Resolution. In the morning, the *Highlander*, under Captain Lucas, spotted the group and took them on board. The missionaries arrived on Aneityum, but were forced to leave for Samoa soon after. Their presence on Aneityum was strongly opposed by the people; placing the lives of the Samoan missionaries on Aneityum at risk (Turner 1984:62).

When Tanna was abandoned in January 1843, there were no immediate plans for further missionary activities. Yet, in the same year, the hand of God played an important role in re-establishing the mission station at Tanna when two Samoan missionaries from Aniwa, Atamu and Iona, sought refuge at Port Resolution. Kuainuai and other chiefs accepted the Samoans and treated them well, especially when only a few months earlier they had sought to kill other missionaries on their island. A feeling of repentance by the Tannese probably motivated the good reception accorded to Atamu and Iona. Furthermore, Iona and Atamu were not strangers to Tanna, having previously sought refuge there in 1841 (Crocrobe and Crocombe 1968:23; Turner 1861:373).

The European missionaries, especially Turner, renewed their friendship with the Tannese in 1845. Twelve chiefs around Port Resolution recommitted themselves to take care of any new missionaries. Chief Iateke, of Kasurumene, accompanied two new missionaries to his village; surprisingly, their names are not recorded (Turner 1984:377-8). A loud cheer greeted the missionaries as they approached Kasurumene. Iateke assembled the whole village. All stood in a circle around the Samoans as he told them to receive their missionaries. The people pledged to attend to the word of God and a big feast followed. Other missionaries left at Port Resolution in 1845 included Pita, Peteru, and Rangia, a Cook Islander, and their wives. Ioane and Marangatanga (Cook Islander) and their wives went to Ratobus; Tagipo and Upokomanu (Cook Islander) and their wives were stationed at Eusefa. The chiefs gave the deputation two young chiefs to take to Samoa as a sign of good faith and commitment.²⁵

In 1846, a great epidemic ravaged the island and the blame rested upon the missionaries again. The Tannese unanimously agreed to kill the missionaries, but were prevented by a very powerful chief named Viavia. The epidemic soon passed and the

missionaries lived. However, a new wave of diseases again hit Tanna and Viavia had trouble appeasing the Tannese. The people attacked the Samoan missionary at Ratobus with clubs and spears. Ioane received serious injuries and the people left him to die but, miraculously, he survived with only a broken jawbone. Another epidemic soon followed and Viavia could not restrain the increasing rage of the Tannese. Saiviri, one of the leaders, killed Vasa, a Samoan missionary, and burnt his house. The surviving teachers and their families sought refuge on a vessel anchored at Port Resolution, which later took them to Aneityum.²⁶

Pita and Upokomanu remained on Aneityum while the rest of their Tanna colleagues returned home in 1846.²⁷ They received instructions to return to Tanna if an opportunity arose. Meanwhile Pita assisted Simeona on Aneityum. In 1847, some four months later, a chief of Port Resolution sent his son to Aneityum to secure missionaries and, as planned, Pita and Upokomanu returned to Tanna in 1848.²⁸ Yet, war continued to plague Tanna. In 1849, Sakaio²⁹ and three Cook Islanders: Mareko, Kau, and Obediah (or Opetaita), arrived to reinforce the work on Tanna. The missionaries continued with little success under the protection of Viavia and Kuainuai. The missionaries again opened three stations in the Port Resolution area, but only attracted very small followings (*Missionary Register*, Dec 1850:181-82). In 1850, the Cook Islands missionaries, Mareko and Kau, died from illness. Sakaio and his wife were seriously ill and were removed to Aneityum. Pita, Obediah, and their wives suffered also, but recovered sufficiently to continue. Peleasaro arrived from Aneityum to render assistance to Pita and Obediah at Tanna (Miller 1975:68-69). Peleasaro and Opetaita worked together at Enehaki, but had to abandon their station when the people threatened to kill them. Peleasaro and Opetaita stayed with Upokomanu at Port Resolution. They managed to encourage the people to build a chapel. However, when sickness spread among the people, they gave up the project because they believed that the spirits (natmas) were angry at them for accepting a new religion. The missionaries became discouraged and attached themselves to a sandalwood establishment at Port Resolution (Murray and Sunderland 1853-54).

The survival of the mission on Tanna took a serious turn in April 1853. A California trading vessel, the *Edward*, carried smallpox. The missionaries were the only ones infected and Opetaita, Peleasaro and Upokomanu became very ill. Pita visited

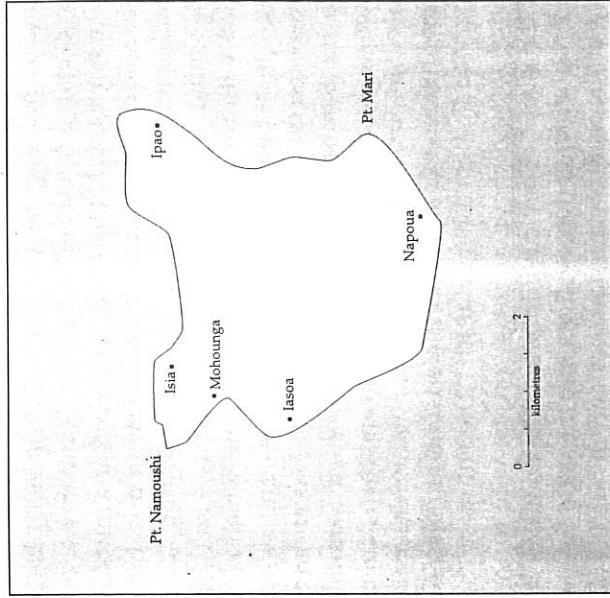
the sick missionaries and their families from his station some distance away. Opetata died soon after and Pita buried him. Pita then left Tanna to take back some Aneityumese and to inform the European missionaries about the situation on Tanna. When Pita returned, he found Peleasaro and Upokomanu in very bad shape. Peleasaro died and a foreigner from the sandalwood establishment buried him. Pita continued to take food to Upokomanu, his wife and four-year-old son. Pita was soon under pressure from the people of his station not to visit the sick missionary again. They feared that Pita would contract the disease and pass it on to them. Pita put aside his fears of the Tannese and continued to visit and comfort Upokomanu and his family. On one of his visits, he found Upokomanu's son wandering outside. Pita entered the mission house and found both Upokomanu and his wife, side by side, dead. Pita asked the chiefs to help bury Upokomanu and his wife, but they got a Chinese man from the sandalwood establishment to help. Pita continued to look after the young child away from his station. He feared the people would harm the child if he took the child to his house. Eventually, the sandalwood establishment looked after the child until Aketangi and his wife, from Erromanga, adopted him (Murray and Sunderland 1853-54).

The smallpox epidemic did not infect the Tannese until they looted the missionaries' properties. Fifteen people died soon after. They asked Pita's advice and were told to burn all the properties and the houses. The Tannese refused, fearing death. Pita took up the task of burning all the missionaries' properties. Several more epidemics followed killing many more Tannese. Pita and some of the Tannese received a horrid and fatal reception from their enemies. Four women, all professed Christians, were killed. Pita, his wife and child escaped to Aneityum with the help of a foreign resident. Pita and his family lived on a small isolated island off Aneityum until they recovered enough to move to the mainland. The abandonment of the Tanna mission saw the last of the Samoan missionaries to Tanna.³⁰

Murray and Sunderland visited the Tanna mission in 1853 and found it unimpressive. Sunderland wrote, "Tanna, unhappy Tanna! is still the same repulsive, forbidding field it has so long been, or, rather, it is a more sad and discouraging state at present" (Murray and Sunderland 1853-54). The Tanna mission was re-opened on 14 October 1854 when two Aneityum missionaries and their wives arrived at Juakaraka (or Anuikaraka) in Port Resolution (Hardie

1854; Turner 1861:475; Murray 1863:156-62).

Futuna



FUTUNA

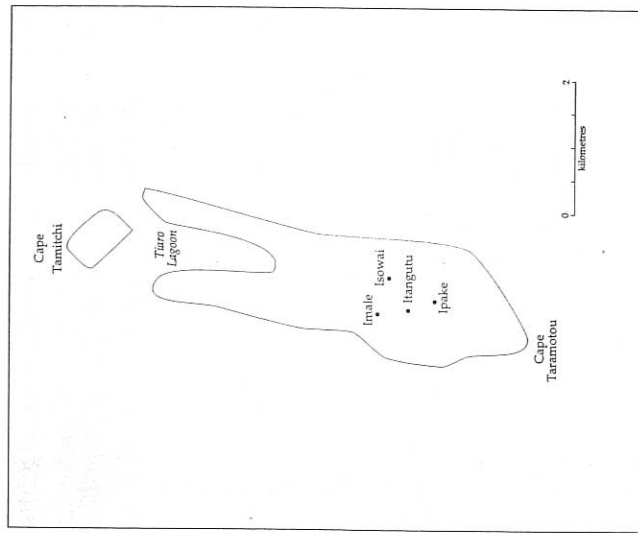
Futuna, known also as Erronan, Fotuna, or Horne Island, is one of the smaller islands and the furthest east of Tanna. The *Camden* had visited Futuna in 1839 and Williams promised to leave missionaries at his next visit. Samoan missionaries arrived at Imounga on 29 March 1841 fulfilling Williams' earlier promise. It was an encouraging welcome by the Futunese, and chief Kotiama (or Kautiama) promised to protect the Futunese, and chief Kotiama Apela.³¹ Kotiama gave Samuela and Apela land to build a house and for their plantation needs. When Aaron Buzacott visited in 1842, he found Samuela and Apela well, and instructing 12 women and 5 men who had professed Christianity (Buzacott 1842). In 1843, during February and March an unexpected epidemic ravaged Futuna changing the whole mood of the mission. The epidemic killed many Futunese. They blamed the Samoan missionaries and the new religion (Christianity) for the epidemic. Some Tannese, visiting Futuna just after a similar epidemic in Tanna, told the

Futunese that killing the missionaries halted the spread of diseases on Tanna (Turner 1984:363; Murray 1863:11, 178; Miller nd:28). The Samoans knew of the hostility towards them, but they continued to persevere, ignoring the threats.

Samuela, his daughter, and Apela, were at their plantation and, towards evening, Apela and Samuela's daughter returned home. A party of Futunese, led by Nasaua, waylaid and killed Apela and Samuela's daughter. Samuela saw Nasaua and his warriors approaching and the thought of any evil intention never entered Samuela's mind. Samuela cheerfully started up when he saw them and stood with the hatchet in his hand with which he had been working, spears flew upon him from all sides, and he fell speared in both legs and the chest" (Turner 1984:364). Nasaua and his party went to the Samoans' house and confronted Samuela's wife. Nasaua made known to her the situation and then demanded that she be his wife. She refused and tried to subdue Nasaua's hostility by offering him an axe and other material items. Nasaua became very angry and clubbed her to death. The Futunese cooked and distributed the bodies of Samuela and his wife to the villages around the island. They cut into pieces the bodies of Apela and Samuela's daughter and threw them into the sea. Nasaua took the property of the Samoan missionaries and divided it among his followers. According to the Futunese, Kotiama sanctioned the killings.³²

When a missionary deputation visited Futuna in 1845, they were unaware of what had taken place. When Fale'ese³³ inquired about Samuela and Apela, the Futunese began a scenario that kept the missionaries on edge for several hours. They kept making excuses for Samuela and Apela's non-appearance. The deputation went ashore, but later returned to the ship when confronted by hostile Futunese (Murray and Turner 1845; Turner 1861:361-63; Murray 1863:13, 1876:230). The deputation received news of the Futuna massacre when they called at Aneityum. Turner refrained from giving the Samoans martyr status although his comments implied otherwise; he wrote: "It cheered us to hear that at the last, they died as they lived, inoffensive and peaceful like Stephen of old, and did not lift a hand to injure their deluded murderers" (Turner 1861:364). The Futuna mission was abandoned, and Samoan missionaries never returned to work on the island. According to Hardie, the Samoans were better used on other islands than on Futuna (Hardie 1854).

Aniwa



ANIWA

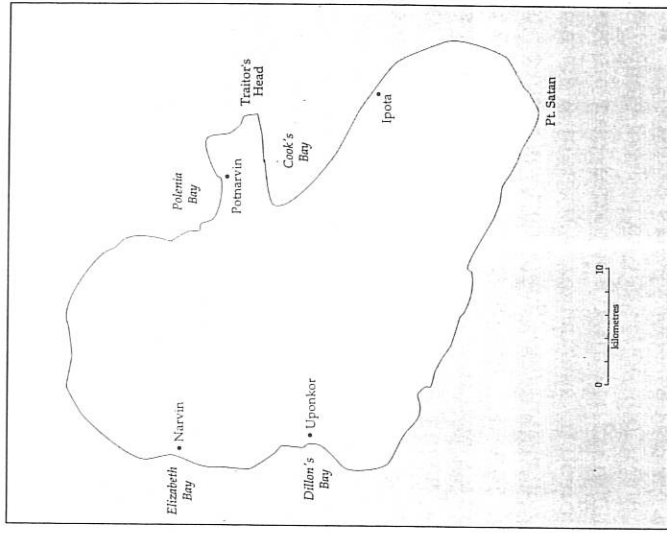
Aniwa, also known as Immer, or Niua, is the second of the smaller islands in the southern Vanuatu group. The first missionaries to Aniwa arrived with Heath in 1840. While at Tanna, Heath acquired the services of Naurita as interpreter. However, Heath became very disappointed when Naurita refused to go ashore at Aniwa. Heath discovered that Naurita had recently fought a war with the people of Aniwa. The Aniwa remained ashore. They were afraid to approach the *Camden*, thinking when they saw Naurita that the vessel was there for revenge. After sorting out the misunderstanding³⁴ people approached the *Camden*. Sakaria (Zechariah)³⁵ jumped into the sea and swam towards the beach. The Aniwa met and embraced Sakaria in the water. Lalolagi, who had boarded the *Camden* at Tanna, also swam ashore. The rest of the missionaries, including Heath, arrived ashore soon after. The chiefs of the island; Nauumu, Nikiaku, Alangi, and Fangota, agreed to receive missionaries. Teava accompanied two Samoans, Iona, and Atamu, to shore and left them under the protection of the chiefs.³⁶

In 1841, Iona and Atamu remained healthy but they had not made much progress in speaking the language or gaining adherents (Murray 1841). An epidemic on the island towards the end of 1841 forced Iona and Atamu to leave Aniwa for Tanna. When Aaron Buzacott visited Tanna in 1842 he found Iona had recovered sufficiently to return to Aniwa. Fale'ese and his family transferred from Tanna to Aniwa to assist Iona. Atamu recovered sufficiently soon after and joined his brethren on Aniwa. In 1843 another epidemic desolated Aniwa and the Samoans left the island again. The Aniwa's again blamed the Samoans for the epidemic and wanted them dead. Atamu and Iona sought refuge on Tanna, while Fale'ese ended up in Futuna. Fale'ese stayed on Futuna for some time before going on to Tanna, and finally returning to Samoa in 1845 (Buzacott 1842; Murray and Turner 1845; Murray 1876:150-51; Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:23). The Aniwa mission closed for the second time in two years.

When Turner and Murray visited Tanna in 1845, they found Iona and Atamu on the island. Both men were taken on board but were not placed back on Aniwa. When Turner and Murray visited Aniwa, the chiefs Naurita and Fangota asked for more missionaries. The deputation provided two fresh Samoan missionaries, Lifau and Vasa, and their families, with a promise that more missionaries would be settled on the next visit of the *John Williams*.³⁷ When Turner visited in 1848, Vasa, Lifau and their families, had left Aniwa because of constant wars. Again the chiefs asked for missionaries but Turner had none to spare. Fangota then requested Iona, who had left in 1843, to be sent back to Aniwa with others (Turner and Nisbet 1848; Turner 1861:439-43; Murray 1885:133-36). However, continuous warfare on Aniwa meant isolation in later years. Eventually, when peace prevailed, the Aniwa's received Aneityumese to carry on the work. Samoan missionaries never returned to Aniwa.

Erromanga

Erromanga, the second largest island in southern Vanuatu, had its share of conflicts internally, as well as with European traders and sailors, before the arrival of missionaries. Erromangans were very different from other Islanders in dialect, skin colour, and character. Its population was scattered over large areas and villages were not well-ordered. The people migrated according to war and planting requirements. Erromanga had numerous chiefs but they



ERROMANGA

were not powerful. The people practised circumcision, cannibalism, and polygamy. The first attempt to introduce the Gospel in 1839 ended in the tragic deaths of Williams and Harris. In May 1840 the *Camden* returned to Dillon's Bay. Heath had no intention of leaving any missionaries on the island. However, two Samoans, Lasalo and Taniela, insisted that they be put ashore.³⁸ Furthermore, Naurita, who accompanied the missionaries, assured Heath that the Samoans would be safe with friends on another part of the island. At Traitor's Head, Naurita, Lasalo and Noa³⁹ went ashore to inform the people of their intentions. Four chiefs, Nauari, Neataie, Tauusi, and Solenau boarded the *Camden* later. According to Heath, the chiefs "assented with smiling countenance, frequently exclaiming Aramai, Aramai, good! good!"⁴⁰

Heath took this as a positive response and willingness of the chiefs to accept missionaries. The two Samoans who volunteered remained under the protection of the chiefs at Traitor's Head. However, after the *Camden* left, the Samoans found it hard to cope as they struggled to survive on their own. Some Aniwa's, who were visiting relatives on Erromanga, came across the Samoans in a bad state of health. For six months, the Aniwa's supplied food

and cared for the Samoans. When the Aniwans returned to their island, Lasalo and Taniela were left on their own (Murray 1876:185, 1863:183-6). They became very sick. A man called Vorevove took pity on them and nursed them back to health. Murray recorded that "Vorevove used to steal quietly down to the hut in which the teachers lived, lift up the hatch, and hand them in their daily supply. It was necessary that he should go about his work of mercy unobserved, as he was acting against the orders of the chiefs" (Murray 1876:187). Murray later remarked that he was surprised that "a savage [Vorevove] should act like this" (Murray 1863:187).

Nauari and Lasalo approached the *Camden* when it visited in 1841. When Nauari was asked to produce Taniela, he beckoned Murray to return to shore. When they were near the beach, Nauari jumped off the boat and waded ashore. He was pursued and brought back to the boat. After a long wait, Taniela finally appeared in another canoe with many Erromangans on board. The canoe kept advancing and retreating without giving up Taniela. Eventually, Taniela jumped off the canoe and swam towards the mission boat. The missionaries safely picked up Taniela who, according to Murray, "sunk down perfectly exhausted into a state of stupor, from which he did not recover till after [they] reached the ship" (Murray 1863:185). Murray freed Nauari later with gifts after he declined to board the *Camden*.

Nauari and the Erromangans had not intended to harm the Samoans. In keeping Taniela as a kind of hostage, Nauari probably felt he could ensure further visits by the mission ships. The supply of material possessions was probably the motive rather than spiritual edification. It was a common practice among European captains to hold Islanders hostage to secure the return of their people from shore. Murray also employed the same tactic in keeping Nauari to guarantee Taniela's release. Nauari probably felt it was appropriate for him to do the same. Nevertheless, Murray feared for the Samoans' safety and insisted that they leave Erromanga. Murray relocated Lasalo and Taniela on the Isles of Pines where, ironically, they died soon after.⁴¹

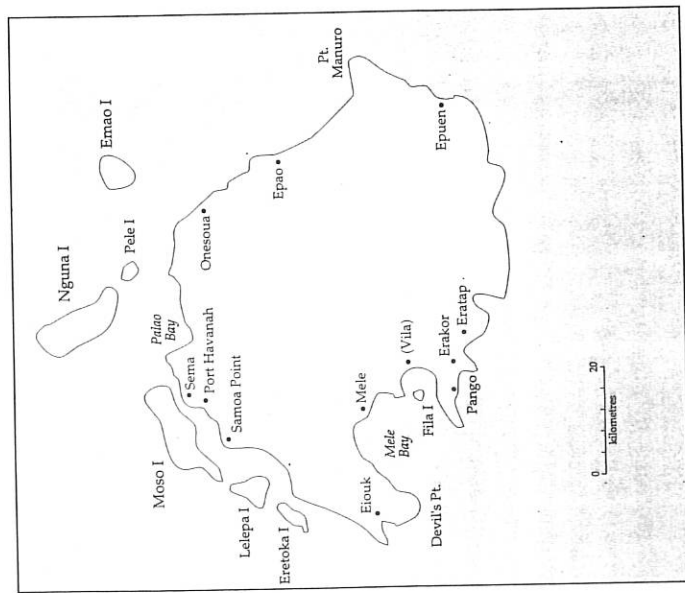
Efforts to renew contacts with Erromanga began in 1845. Without an interpreter, communication was impossible and people remained at a distance. Some Erromangans later approached the ship with offerings of sandalwood. Turner returned the sandalwood together with his own offering of gifts. The mission ship left with Turner lamenting that the Erromangans would remember their

visit as "the vessel which shows kindness and does not take sandalwood" (Turner 1984:385). It was not until 1849, that four Erromangans, Joe, Mana, Nivave, and Nebore, were induced to go to Samoa. After three years in Malua, the four men returned, but Nivave died some three days from Erromanga. The missionaries landed on 22 May 1852. Two chiefs, Naioan (or Naiwan) and Kaiuui (or AuwiAuwi), welcomed the Erromangans and the rest of the missionaries. Mana⁴² and his companions interpreted for the visitors. The two chiefs pledged to protect two Cook Islands missionaries, Va'a and Aketangi and their wives, at Dillon's Bay (Murray and Sunderland 1852). Many more chiefs asked for missionaries. Not far from Dillon's Bay other missionaries worked at Bunkil. A Cook Islander, Meariki, went to Navin (Elizabeth Bay), the village of Joe. The chiefs, however, asked Murray to provide European missionaries in the future. Perhaps, with European missionaries on the island, it would guarantee frequent visits by the mission ships in the future. Murray left full of confidence and optimistic for the future of the mission in Erromanga (Murray 1863:188-91; Murray 1876:290; Miller 1975:126-7).

The work on Erromanga progressed slowly during the next few years, except at Navin where the mission station was abandoned after only three months; the people wanted to find new land for plantations, so they up and left (Hardie 1854; Miller 1975:162). In 1855, the Samoan missionaries, Isaako and Maili (or Maeli),⁴³ arrived to reinforce the work already carried out by their Cook Islands brethren. Soon after, an epidemic spread throughout the island and the Erromangans returned to their usual tribal wars. The Samoans became very ill while other missionaries, including Mana, had their lives threatened. Finally, the missionaries abandoned Erromanga and all of them, including Mana, went to Aneityum. Isaako and Maili returned to Samoa soon after, and were the last Samoan missionaries to Erromanga (Murray 1863:188-91, 1876:290; Miller 1975:126-27).

Efate

Efate, also known as Sandwich Island, or Vate, is a large island to the north of Erromanga. The evangelization of Efate resulted from a fortuitous meeting between Turner, Murray, and Captain J.C. Lewis, of the *Ariel*, at Dillon's Bay in 1845. Turner and Murray were surveying the possibility of re-opening the mission at Erromanga when Captain Lewis told them about a group of



EFATE

Tongans on Efate. Captain Lewis also conveyed a message from Sualo, a resident of Efate, that he wanted Samoan missionaries for Efate. This raised much interest and the *John Williams* sailed for Efate. Captain Lewis also provided a young Maori lad, who had been living on Efate, to point out Sualo's village (Turner 1861:386; Murray 1863:233-4; Miller nd:16). At Efate, the Maori and two Samoan missionaries located Sualo at Erakor. An emotional meeting took place between Sualo and the Samoans, when Sualo claimed that he originated from Savai'i.⁴⁴ Sualo had three wives, one of which was a daughter of Talia Pomare, the chief of the district. The Efateans feared Sualo and many chiefs hired his services in battle. Sualo, supported by Talia Pomare, requested that Samoan missionaries live on Efate (Turner 1861:391-93; *Missionary Register*, Dec 1850:185; Miller nd:16).

Setefano and Mose looked after Erakor with Sualo, while Ta'avili and Sipi took up their abode at Pango. A year later, progress on Efate was encouraging. Many people attended worship services regularly. The Samoans established three more mission stations as well as schools on the island. The Samoans, Lealamanu'a, Sepania, Ioane and Fepulea'i, arrived in 1845, while the Cook Islanders,

Ratai, and Tairi (or Taili), arrived a year later to staff the extra stations. However, the enthusiasm and interest of the Efateans soon wore off and the Efateans went back to their old ways. The constant conflicts with Europeans immediately continued and much killing took place between the two sides. It made missionary work difficult. At times they were caught in the middle of Efatean conflicts (Murray 1863:238). The ten missionaries became stressed as they lost members through sickness and violent abuse (Murray 1863:234-38, 1885:147; *Missionary Register*, Dec 1850:183-85).

The wives of Setefano and Ioane died from severe illnesses. Lealamanu'a caught a cold, and then was injured by a fallen tree; he never recovered. His Samoan brethren reported that "he died entreating the chiefs and people round him to receive Christ into their hearts and exhorting his fellow [missionaries] to love one another, and [to] be faithful unto death" (Turner and Nisbet 1848; Murray and Sunderland 1852; Turner 1861:446; Miller 1975:127). Tairi, who worked at Mele, died of malaria in 1847, and the chief successfully claimed his property, but not his wife. Tairi's wife refused him and she drowned herself before the brethren could get to her. Sipi and Ratai, both stationed at Fila, became very ill. Ratai died shortly after Tairi, in May 1847. The missionaries on Pango asked Sipi to leave Fila, but Sipi refused.⁴⁵ He feared that the people would steal all his property if he left. The Pango missionaries left Sipi to the care of a young lad while they attended to their Sunday duties. On Sunday, the Fila people went to Sipi's house. Sipi was very suspicious and tried to evict them. Sipi, however, was struck on the chest by an ali, a block of wood Sipi had used as a pillow. According to the Samoans, Sipi was killed because of a custom that required sick people who become delirious to be put to death, or buried alive; otherwise the deliriousness would spread to others. Sipi's canoe, chest, and other property was taken by the people of Fila (Turner and Nisbet 1848; Murray and Sunderland 1852; Turner 1861:446, 453; Murray 1863:238-42, 1885:148-51; Miller 1975:127; Miller nd:57).

Mose and Sepania abandoned Olatapu (or Eratap). They had faced death when they tried to help the shipwrecked crew of the *British Sovereign*. Mose and Sepania saved one crew member named John Jones. Ten others were cooked and eaten. John Jones left with Mose a letter that acknowledged his gratefulness. The letter, written on 16 May 1847, referred especially to Mose's courage.

This is to certify that Mose and his partner left Tap [Eratap]

on the 16th of May, we had to run for our life to get clear of them, left everything behind, when the British Sovereign [sic] his long boat came and fire at them. J. Jones, was the only one that was saved out of the crew, they killed them all, through Mose I was saved and I beg of you to give him something, he is a good man, he venture more than any man would think and after all had run, I hope the Lord will pay him for his trouble with me (Turner 1861:449).

Setefano, Sepania, Ta'avili and Tupo, kept Erakor and Pango opened.⁴⁶ The Samoans preached and held schools whenever possible. They also concentrated their efforts in preventing infanticide and the burying alive of the elderly. The Efateans considered it a disgrace if an elderly person was not buried alive. They became increasingly hostile and objected to the Samoans interfering with their customs, especially when it meant hindering the accompanying big feasts (Turner 1861:449-50).

With Mele, Fila, and Olatapu abandoned, new stations were established around the villages of Tome, Uatone, and Magaliu, at Sema, near Havanah Harbour. At the time Tome was at war with Uatone, but the missionaries mediated and established peace between the villages. The chiefs all agreed to receive missionaries. Mose and Sailuse looked after the mission station at Uatone under chiefs Tokunimaro and Marumaroro. Iona and Simona lived with chiefs Taliliu and Tuitogamata at Magaliu. Sualo, who accompanied the missionaries, remained to help settle the Samoans into their work.⁴⁷ Powell, who was with Geddie and others, was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of the people at Sema. He wanted to stay but Nisbet changed Powell's mind. Nisbet told Powell that it was unsafe because the people were still at war. He also pointed out that recent killing and destruction by sandalwood traders had driven the people to seek revenge. Nisbet suggested it was best to allow the Samoan missionaries to ease the mind of the people. If after a year the Samoans were still alive, then it would be a good place to consider for a European missionary station. Powell changed his mind and concurred with his fellow brethren (Turner and Nisbet 1848).

In 1849, diseases and war again hindered efforts on Efate. People became unfriendly and abstained from attending worship services and instructions. Schools were no longer functioning as parents wanted their children to work instead of learning. The

Efateans also became bitter when the Samoans refused to take part in their wars. Most of all, they continuously blamed the Samoans for the diseases that had killed many of their people. The epidemics also took their toll on the Samoans. It claimed the lives of Sepania, Simona, and Iona, and three Samoan children (Murray 1863:242-43; *Missionary Register*, Dec 1850:184). The people of Mele also tried to kill a Samoan missionary, possibly Ioane, at Havanah Harbour. The attempt failed, prompting the people of Fila to take up the challenge to kill the Samoan missionary. The Fila attempt failed, finishing on the rocks after they were driven ashore by strong winds. The Samoans, Mose, Tupo, Sailuse, and Ta'avili, left Efate and returned to Samoa. Erakor remained open under Setefano and Ioane.⁴⁸

The Samoans made great progress on Erakor due to the influence of peace. A chapel was built, in the shape of a Samoan house, for worship. The people observed Sunday and about 100 people attended Sunday services regularly. Family worship in the evening among some of the people also became a common sight. The customs of burying people alive and infanticide decreased. Some of the chiefs who professed Christianity also intervened in stopping people being buried alive. The Samoans began visits again to other stations, including Pango and Olatapu. In 1852, Ioane and a new Cook Islands missionary, Tauri, took charge at Erakor. Setefano was not well and the deputation decided to return him to Samoa. Before leaving Efate, the deputation visited Sema at Havanah Harbour to drop off a chief named Tongalulu who had been to Samoa. Tongalulu was determined to re-establish missionaries at Sema after seeing the effect of the gospel in Samoa. Setefano agreed to stay at Sema until new missionaries arrived (Murray and Sunderland 1848; Murray 1863:247-49; Miller 1975:128).

Two months later, an epidemic in Erakor killed 15 people. The people blamed Tauri and Ioane. Talia Pomare and half of the people supported the missionaries. Eventually, the opposing party forced Ioane and Tauri to live with Setefano, after which they threatened to kill them. The epidemic continued and killed 11 more people. The people of Erakor became fearful and believed the epidemic got worse because they were unkind to the missionaries. After two weeks, Erakor welcomed the missionaries back to their village. During the missionaries' absence, Talia Pomare and local teachers continued to hold worship services. Many people in Erakor put

themselves under instruction and many more abandoned unchristian customs. The excellent turnaround at Erakor was offset by the deaths of Tauri's wife and child. The state of the mission at other stations was depressing. At Pango people began to build a chapel but burnt it down when many of their number became sick. They blamed Christianity for the deaths. They also killed and ate 22 Sema traders (also professed Christians) who were visiting Pango at the time. At Sema itself, Tongalulu failed to fulfil his obligations and promises. Setefano had set up a school and established a church, but attendance was very poor. Setefano became very sick and left Sema to recover at Erakor (Murray and Sunderland 1848; Murray 1863:251-53).

The saddest event, in 1852, was the killing of two Cook Islands missionaries, Pikika'a and Kaveriri, who lived under the care of Fatutoka and Marikone on Lelepa Island, at the entrance of Havanah Harbour.⁴⁹ Murray recalled the scene when the two missionaries entered the village on Lelepa:

...the joy of the people seemed to know no bounds: men, women, and children crowded around us. Some of the principal chiefs seized our hands and led us through the village while the crowd manifested their joy in ways the most unmistakable. We never saw teachers on the first landing meet with such an enthusiastic reception (Murray 1885:153; Miller 1975:164-5).

Nineteen days later, the Lelepa people killed and ate the missionaries and their families. The son of one missionary was thrown into the sea and left to drown. The young lad managed to reach shore again. The people caught him and cut his hands off before he was killed and consumed. The killings were, as in previous cases, motivated by the fear that missionaries caused epidemics. Their logic centred around the desire to preserve life rather than face illness and death (Hardie 1854).⁵⁰

Ironically, an epidemic broke out soon after and killed 150 people around Efate. Tauri and Varu died from fever leaving Setefano and Varu's widow as the only survivors.⁵¹ When Hardie found Setefano at Erakor in 1853, Setefano burst into tears as he recounted the death of his brethren. Setefano and Varu's widow left Efate for Samoa; with them went Sualo, who feared for his life. The mission on Efate was abandoned before the year was over. Setefano died on the voyage home on 1 December 1853 and his body did not reach his family until January 1854.⁵¹ Setefano was

the last Samoan missionary to work on Efate. Samoan missionaries never returned to Efate as their susceptibility to fever and other illnesses rendered them unsuitable for work on the island.⁵²

Reflections

The work of the Samoan missionaries in southern Vanuatu was one of blood, sweat and tears. From the beginning their task was arduous and painful. They encountered familiar mission problems: different languages, cultures, customs, and so forth. The Samoans were strangers to southern Vanuatu ideology just as the first European missionaries were alien to Tahitian beliefs. It was not easy to settle down and create lasting relationships in such environments. Constant changes in missionary movements and activities also hindered the creation of harmonious interaction. When relationships actually were established, they quickly disintegrated when disease and death visited the islands.

The numerous epidemics indiscriminately killed Samoan missionaries as well as Ni-Vanuatu. The surviving Samoans were either killed or forced to find sanctuary on other islands. While traders and other visitors introduced many of the fatal diseases to the islands, the LMS deputation visits also contributed. Between 1839 and 1860, the LMS made some 15 visits and each time an epidemic of minor or serious proportions took place within weeks of their departure. The missionaries remaining on the islands felt the brunt of the hostility and revenge for something beyond their control.

Death was the most disruptive and destructive force to the success of missions in southern Vanuatu. Apart from diseases, the objection by sacredmen who stood to lose some of their power and authority over their people was a great hurdle. Great objections also came from chiefs and principal men who stood to lose authority and material wealth over the denunciation of unchristian customs. Strong oppositions such as these led the Samoan missionaries to abandon their obligations, at one time or another, on five of the islands; namely Tanna, Aniwa, Futuna, Erromanga, and Efate. They did not abandon their work because of any flaws in their character, but rather because of danger and threats to their lives. The loss of lives disrupted the continuity of mission work. Aneityum was the only island that Samoan missionaries worked continuously for about 20 years and the one in which the Samoans were most successful.

Mission failures in the early period, 1839-1845, occurred due to the lack of planning and foresight by European missionaries. Their assumption that language and dialects could be acquired without effort was the greatest miscalculation. Furthermore, European missionaries believed Melanesian interpreters were sufficient to introduce the gospel. While it was a necessity and an advantage, it was useless if the interpreters could not comprehend their sources. Missionaries could neither speak nor understand the language and dialects of the islands. Therefore, they could not have communicated clearly, much less correctly, to the people, or to their interpreters, their aim for visiting.⁵⁴ The misinterpretations probably led to some of the unfortunate, at times fatal, misunderstandings between the people and the Samoan missionaries.

The abandonment of Samoan missionaries by those who, supposedly, had vowed to protect and provide for their welfare, was a great stumbling block. However, the actions of the Ni-Vanuatu should not be seen in terms of them 'abandoning the Samoans', but rather the way they understood the missionaries and their interpreters. It was not until the Samoan missionaries were able to explain to the people in their own languages the purpose of their residence that Ni-Vanuatu began to understand. We should also consider that the Ni-Vanuatu, in leaving the Samoan missionaries to themselves, were rejecting a new religion rather than deliberately abandoning the Samoans. At times it was common for people to move camps for new planting fields or because of war. The Samoans may not have understood this and, like their European brethren, interpret it as abandonment.

The Samoan missionaries were rejected for other reasons, for example, because European missionaries failed to make frequent visits. The presence of European missionaries, especially in the early years, was critical to the survival of the Samoans and the mission stations. When Williams left Samoan missionaries on Ianna in 1839, the people told Williams to be back in "three moons" (Prout 1843:574). The failure of the LMS to return within such a short period of time may have led to the abandoning of the Samoan missionaries by the Tannese. On Aneityum, many who had earlier shown interest in the work of the Samoans withdrew when they thought that the Samoans had been abandoned. Thus the Samoans, initially, were accepted more as insurance or security, to guarantee the return of the White men (European missionaries) with further

offerings and gifts.

When Samoan missionaries secured footholds on the various islands, the lack of European supervision led the people to fall out. The superficial spiritual foundation and lack of biblical enlightenment meant the Samoans lacked the ability to solidify the foundations they had established. The foundations deteriorated, or were usually destroyed, before any conversion could take place. The European missionaries should have established themselves with the Samoans early. While Turner and Nisbet did fill this responsibility, they failed to persevere. The withdrawal and the lengthy absence of the White missionaries created an impression that Samoan missionaries were unimportant.

The Samoan missionaries fulfilled their work through Samoan understanding and composure. Although they were not criticized in forcing upon the people the fa'a Samoa, (especially the Samoan language and culture), they were, however, criticized for their heavy handed treatment of the people. The European missionaries, especially Geddie, criticized the Samoans for being too physical, but he never objected when the Samoans used their physical strength when his life was on the line (Miller 1975:67). In these circumstances, the physical characteristics of the Samoans was a bonus. It gave the Samoans bargaining power, but never in an oppressive manner, in order to get out of tight situations. Furthermore, it probably gained them respect and aided their efforts in establishing themselves among the people.

The Samoan missionaries, at times, went close to death because of starvation and lack of companionship. This may have been caused by Samoan pride and a misunderstanding of a different culture. In Samoa the status of teacher and missionary created an elite group to rival the matai. The people served the new group as they did their matai out of respect that they were servants of God. This mentality strengthened as Samoans observed and imitated European missionaries. Perhaps the Samoan missionaries to southern Vanuatu expected similar treatment. When this was not forthcoming they became frustrated and wanted to return home. The introduction of Cook Islands missionaries to work with the Samoans did not combat homesickness, but it did stir the Samoans to succeed. Failure in the eyes of non-Samoans in the same vocation can have a significant impact on Samoan pride.

European missionaries believed that Samoan pride was a limitation to the Samoans' mission effort. However, Samoan pride

was what gave them the courage to lay their lives on the line for the gospel. It was never a reason for approaching their task negatively. Samoan pride demanded success rather than failure. More important, Samoan pride meant rising to the expectations of the matai, friends, villages, parishes, and districts. Furthermore, Samoan pride does not disgrace the name and honour of one's family by failing. The extent and importance of family honour and pride was expressed in the Samoan cliché, "E sili lo matou va'ai atu ua aumai o oe i se pusa uliuli, i le matou va'ai atu ua e toe fo'i mai ua e le mafaia le galuega" - literally, "It is better for us to see you return in a black box [coffin] than to see you having failed to do the work".

Some European missionaries labelled their Samoan brethren as "ineffective agents", although under similar circumstances European missionaries were never referred to as such. The ineffectiveness of the Samoans was first raised by Murray when the Samoans demanded to return home in 1846. The failure of the Samoans to maintain mission stations at some of the islands, and the slowness of gaining converts and expanding mission boundaries also contributed to the image of "ineffective agents". However, the failure to maintain a mission station due to illness and threats should not be construed as ineffective. The 'slow and easy' approach of the Samoan missionaries was natural and an effective method of reaching and gaining the confidence of the people. European missionaries tend to rush and force things to happen rather than allowing time to foster results. The Islanders understood this kind of attitude as aggression, and resented it. The "ineffective agent" label was probably contrived to thwart Samoans showing intuition and imagination and courage to express themselves. Despite the many set-backs, the Samoans were very effective in their tasks. The effectiveness of the Samoans must be measured by their efforts in sustaining mission work without European supervision. It must also be measured by the benefits gained by, and assistance accorded to, the European missionaries. It is a fact that without the Samoans, and other island missionaries, European missionaries could never have survived nor become effective agents in southern Vanuatu.

One of Geddie's aims when he first arrived in southern Vanuatu, was to replace the Samoans with local missionaries. This was not a new idea. It was the most effective vehicle of evangelization at the disposal of any mission. However, in Geddie's

case, his intention seems to have stemmed from the European missionary mentality that Samoans were ineffective evangelists. Furthermore, Geddie was probably influenced by Nisbet and others who privately and tacitly saw the Samoans primarily as guinea pigs to test the safety of mission fields (Turner and Nisbet 1848). Geddie's own superior attitude over the Samoans and other island missionaries matched these attitudes. Geddie treated the Samoan missionaries as servants rather than fellow workers (Murray 1863:33-4; Miller 1975:39-40). The Samoans, on the other hand, never thought of themselves as subordinates but as fellow workers with their European brethren. Samoans saw the European missionaries as leaders and supervisors, but never their masters. The Samoans had their weaknesses - susceptibility to diseases, lack of theological training, inability to work together at times, moral laxity, easily distracted - the same weaknesses that also plagued many European missionaries.

Overall, the Samoan missionaries in southern Vanuatu were successful in what they set out to achieve. They not only succeeded in laying the foundation for later missionary efforts but also planted the gospel and established numerous mission stations. They opened doors and created friendly relationships for Christianity to grow. The Samoan missionaries were the 'John the Baptists' of the southern Vanuatu mission. The Samoan Church referred to their pioneering brethren as those who had "asa le vaosa" (waded through the sacred bushes). The phrase symbolized the difficulty of the task and, at the same time, the courage of the Samoans to take up such a task. The experiences of the Samoan missionaries benefited later missionary efforts to Vanuatu and New Caledonia. It also laid the foundation for the Samoans' missionary effort to Papua New Guinea in later years. Samoan missionaries were more prepared to expect the unexpected. They became more aware of the hindrances to their performance. They became respected as missionaries in their own right, and gained the respect of European missionaries as equals in their work.

In many historical monographs, European missionaries receive, unashamedly, full credit for the evangelization of southern Vanuatu. However, Samoan missionaries and their island brethren must be acknowledged in the same breath, if not more so, with their European brethren. Mrs J.G. Paton died soon after she arrived on Tanna, but she acknowledged early the impact of the island

missionaries and gave them credit. She remarked that "the native Christian teachers are really the true Pioneers of the Mission, and deserve far more sympathy than we [European missionaries] do" (Paton 1912:33). Samoans and their island missionary brethren have earned, and deserve, a more prominent place in Pacific and mission history as lofty bearers of the "Errand of Mercy".

Abbreviations

LMS	London Missionary Society.
<i>Missionary Register</i>	<i>Missionary Register of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia</i>
SDC	Samoan District Committee of the London Missionary Society
SSJ	South Sea Journals, Records of the London Missionary Society, School of Oriental and African Studies, London
SSL	South Sea Letters (incoming), Records of the London Missionary Society, School of Oriental and African Studies, London

Notes

- 1 Pe'a took the title O le Auauna a Keriso, literally "A Servant of Christ".
- 2 The first Samoan missionaries selected were Lei'ataua (Manono), Sa'u (Apolima), Mose (Sale'imoa), Salamea (Iva), Lalolagi (Malie), Paulo (Falelatai), Fa'asavalu (Falelatai), Seupule (Sale'imoa), Mose (Fua'upolu), Filipo (Iva) and Ioane (Iva). Heath to Ellis, SSL, 21 Oct 1839; Williams 1839; Heath 1840; *Sulu Samoa*, 1930:126-34.
- 3 Those who returned were Paulo, Fa'savalu, Seupule, Mose (Fua'upolu), Mose (Iva), Filipo and Ioane.
- 4 Alas, Williams! Alas, Williams! (Prout 1843:587).
- 5 SDC Minutes, 30 Mar 1840, SSL; Heath 1840.
- 6 The Samoans who accompanied Heath were, from Tutuila: Tanielu (posted to Isle of Pines), Pomare (Vanuatu), Fauvasa (New Caledonia), Pagisa (New Caledonia) and Vaifaga (Vanuatu); and from Upolu: Noa (Isle of Pines and New Caledonia). See Heath to Ellis, 26 May 1840, SSL; Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:21-30.
- 7 The nine pastors who went out in 1841 included, from Savai'i: Tavita, Fuata'iese and Tataio; from Upolu: Samuela and Taniela; and from Tutuila: Apela, Taniela, Fale'ese and Apolo. The other member was Mataio, a Cook Islander who had been living in Samoa for about a year (Murray 1876:184). Taniela, from Falealili (Upolu) died in 1884, and Tataio from Sapapali'i returned to Samoa in 1848 (Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:23-24).

- 8 Both were from Sapapali'i. It is not known what triggered the split between them (see Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:23-24; Murray 1841, 1863:22-29; Buzacott 1842).
- 9 Simeona's village in Samoa is not known. Apolo is probably the same Apolo that Murray took to Melanesia in 1841. Murray had left Apolo working on Tanna from 1842. It is possible that the 1842 deputation relocated Apolo to Aneityum, as was the case with Fale'ese to Aniwa (Murray 1841, 1863:22-29; Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:23-24).
- 10 Turner had been a missionary to Tanna in 1842-43 (Turner 1861:19-62).
- 11 I suspect that Poti and Apaia were Cook Islanders, although some sources label them as Samoans. They arrived on Aneityum in 1845. The word *poti* in Samoa refers to male sexual organs and it would not have been an appropriate name for a Samoan missionary (Murray 1863:29-30; Turner 1861:370).
- 12 Upokomanu, a Cook Islander, also remained on Aneityum in anticipation of a return to Tanna.
- 13 Geddie and Archibald were missionaries of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, who worked at Aneityum in conjunction with the LMS. Powell himself was an LMS missionary (Garrett 1982:168).
- 14 *Missionary Register of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia* (hereafter abbreviated to *Missionary Register*), Feb 1850:24-25; Miller 1975:28-30.
- 15 The villages of Munumunu and Akuila in Samoa are not known. While Geddie mentions Akuila to be from Samoa, the name itself, Akuila, is more Fijian or Cook Islands (*Missionary Register*, Feb 1850:24-25; Miller, 1975:36-38).
- 16 A different Pita from the one who worked with Simeona in 1846 and returned to Tanna in 1848. This Pita may have returned to Samoa soon after due to illness.
- 17 Amosa arrived in 1852. His village in Samoa is unknown, although he is from the island of Upolu. He returned to Samoa in 1857 (Murray and Sunderland 1852).
- 18 Kuka had taken the place of Munumunu (Murray and Sunderland 1852; Miller 1975:109-10, 195).
- 19 Two of the Samoans were Simona (arrived 1853) at Aneigauhat, and Pita (from Tanna) at Ipece (Murray and Sunderland 1853-54; Murray 1863:106, 1876:294-331; Miller 1975:123).
- 20 This is the Pita who worked with Simeona in 1846 and returned to Tanna in 1848. He later went back to Aneityum in 1853 and worked at Ipece.
- 21 Lalolagi was from the village of Malie (Upolu). Salamea was from the village of Iva (Savai'i), although one source gave his village as Sagaga (Upolu). There were three Mose among the Samoan contingent of 1939, but according to Ta'unga, the Mose left on Tanna was from the village of Sale'imoa (Upolu). See Heath to Ellis, 21 Oct 1840, SSL; Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:22; *Sulu Samoa*, 1930:126-34; Prout 1843:572.
- 22 Pomare was from Pagopago. It is possible that Vaiofaga was also from Pagopago as he was a member of Murray's church. (Heath to Ellis, 26 May 1840, SSL; Heath 1840; Murray 1863:138).
- 23 It is possible that Mose was removed from Tanna in the same year due to immoral behaviour. It was also toward the end of 1841 that the

Samoa missionaries Iona and Atamu arrived from Aniwa (Murray 1841, 1861:138-40; Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:22).

24 It was possible that with the arrival of the European missionaries, Apolo and his family were relocated on Aneityum (Murray 1841, Murray and Turner 1845; Turner 1861:8-10; Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:22).

25 Pita, Ioane and Tagipo were from Tutuila. Ioane and Tagipo returned to Samoa in 1846 (Murray and Turner 1845; Turner 1861:378; Murray 1863:146-47).

26 Vasa's body was recovered and taken to Aneityum where he was given a decent burial. Vasa (or Fauvasa) was from Tutuila. Vasa first settled at Aniwa in 1845 with Lifau, but left Aniwa because of constant wars, c.1847. Murray recalled Vasa as "a plain man, with no very marked individuality or strength of character but he was, we trust, a sincere disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Murray 1863:148-50, 163, 1885:133-36, 186; Murray and Turner 1845).

27 Turner and Nisbet (1848) mentioned that two ex-Tanna missionaries worked on Aneityum. Pita was one but the other is not named. It is possible that Upokomanu, a Cook Islander, was the other. He is mentioned working on Tanna from 1848. When Pita worked with Simeona, Upokomanu's whereabouts cannot be traced.

28 Upokomanu may have returned to Tanna some months before Pita (Turner and Nisbet 1848).

29 Sakaio, whose home village is unknown, later worked on Aneityum and returned to Samoa in 1857.

30 Pita arrived on Tanna in 1845, was posted to Aneityum the following year and returned to Tanna in 1848. At Aneityum (in 1853) he worked with Inglis. He returned to Samoa in 1860 where he died in 1870 (Murray and Sunderland 1853-54; Murray 1863:153-55, 1876:295; Miller 1975:155).

31 Samuela was from Falealili, Upolu. His wife and daughter joined him on Futuna in 1842. (Murray 1863:10-11, 1886:138; Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:23). Apela, described by Turner (1861:364) as a "humble, harmless, kind little man", was unmarried (Murray 1841, 1876:184, 1886:138; Miller nd:26-27).

32 According to Miller (nd:28-30), Kotiama (not Nasaua) killed Samuela's wife (see also Turner 1861:364; Murray 1863:10-14, 1885:140-41).

33 Fale'ese was a missionary to Tanna in 1841 and relocated to Aniwa in 1842, but left after an epidemic on the island. He was on Futuna for a short time, probably 1843-44, and later returned to Tanna where he boarded the *John Williams* and returned to Samoa.

34 Heath said, by this time he "had acquired a few words of the language" to be able to communicate with the Aniwas (Heath 1840).

35 Sakaria was a Manono chief and missionary. He went to the Isle of Pines and New Caledonia.

36 Iona was from the village of Falefa, Upolu, while Atamu was from the island of Manono. Their wives and children joined them in 1841 (Heath to Ellis, 26 May 1840, SSL; Heath 1840; Murray 1841).

37 Murray recalls Vasa as having gone out with Heath in 1840. If so, then Vasa is that same person named Fauvasa who returned with Heath to Samoa after refusing to land in New Caledonia with Pagisa (or Pogisa).

Murray wrote that Vasa and his wife were part of the first church established in Pagopago (1840). Vasa's wife died soon after they arrived on Aniwa. Nothing is known about Lifau. He may have gone back to Samoa when Aniwa was abandoned (Murray 1885:133-36; Murray and Turner 1845; Turner 1861:382).

38 Lasalo was from Tufulele and Taniela from Mulifanua (Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:23).

39 Noa was from Manono and was stationed in the Isle of Pines and New Caledonia.

40 There is no such word as "aramai" in the Erromanga language. It is possible that the word might be "romai", which means "come" or "welcome". To further complicate matters, the word "romai" is of Polynesian root and is found in Aniwa and Futuna languages Capel 1984; Heath 1840; Heath to Ellis, 26 May 1840, SSL; Turner 1861:382-83).

41 When Murray visited Vanuatu and New Caledonia in 1841 there were four Taniela working in the region. Taniela (of Mulifanua) at Erromanga, who died in the Isle of Pines; Taniela (Tutuila) at the Isle of Pines; Taniela (also of Tutuila) at Britannia Island; and Taniela (Falealili) at New Caledonia. See Murray 1841, 1876:185.

42 Mana and Joe worked among their people until 1860. Mana at once fled to Aneityum and assisted the missionaries there, because he refused to take part in the wars on Erromanga. Neboire relapsed to his old "heathen" ways (Murray 1863:192, 198).

43 Isaako and Maili's villages in Samoa are unknown.

44 Sualo (known also as Swallow), left Samoa c.1825, after the Atua wars, with 50 Tongans bound for Vava'u, in northern Tonga. Blown off course, they arrived on a very small islet called Three Hills (also known as Tongoa, Mai, or Emae). They settled on the islet and conquered the inhabitants. Some time later they tried again to reach Tonga but failed, and landed instead at Erakor. The name Sualo could be So'oalo, a chiefly name from a village in Savai'i (see Turner 1861:391).

45 Sipi was from Pagopago. He had joined Murray's family at the commencement of the mission on Tutuila, learned to read and write, and became a church member in December 1839. He went out as a missionary in 1845. He was a quiet, modest and thoughtful person, and inclined to be reserved.

46 Tupo's village in Samoa is not known. He arrived on the *John Williams* in 1848 (Turner and Nisbet 1848).

47 Sailuse, Iona and Simona all arrived in 1848. Mose was previously at Eratap with Sepania (Turner and Nisbet 1848; Turner 1861:454-56; Murray 1863:244).

48 Murray 1863:244-46, 1885:151. Fepulea'i, who arrived in 1845, is the only other Samoan whose movements the sources fail to mention. Possibly he died during the 1847 epidemic; if so his name was not recorded. The other possibility is that he left with the others for Samoa in 1849.

49 Miller (nd:60) says the chief's name was Marifatu, which sound like a combination of the names Fatutoka and Marikone. I believe Murray is correct in saying that there were two chiefs.

50 A different version is given by Miller (nd:61), who says that the young

- boy was thrown into the sea with a stone tied around his neck.
- 51 Varu was a Cook Islands missionary who arrived in 1852. The fate of Ioane, who worked with Tauri at Erakor, is not known. He probably also died in the epidemic that killed Varu and Tauri. Ioane's wife had died soon after they arrived on Efate, and he worked alone until his death in 1852 or 1853.
- 52 Setefano was from Papogago. He received instruction from Murray and later offered himself for mission work. He was one of the first four teachers placed on Efate in 1845. His wife died 18 months after they arrived and he worked alone until leaving the island. Murray remembered Setefano "as one of the first who 'bore the heat and burden of the day' in laying the foundation of that [Efate] mission". See Hardie 1854; Murray 1863:257, 1876:296-97; Miller 1975:127-28; Miller nd:17.
- 53 The same applied to the Cook Islanders who replaced the Samoan missionaries when the Efate mission was opened in 1858. Three Cook Islanders were located at Erakor under the care of Talia Pomare. In 1860 two Aneityum missionaries were landed on Erakor to assist Toma and Teaumau; and in 1861 a European missionary settled on Efate.
- 54 Heath (1840), for example, took the view that it was a simple matter to communicate with a knowledge of basic words.

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