

MISSION IN THE SAMOAN WAY:

THE IMPACT OF FA'A-SAMOA ON THE LMS SAMOAN MISSIONS

TO THE WESTERN PACIFIC 1839 – 1930.

by

SAULEONE TANOI

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DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to my

Wife and Son

and

In memory of our dear beloved brother and friend

The late

Tubusereia Kadeboro Isaia Tiatia

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GLOSSARY

<i>aiga</i>	family
<i>ali'i</i>	high ranking chief
<i>aualuma</i>	group of untitled women
<i>aumaga</i>	group of untitled men
<i>aulotu</i>	congregation
<i>fa'aaloalo</i>	respect
<i>fa'alavelave</i>	special occasions
<i>fa'alupega</i>	honorific praise of ranking order of chiefs
<i>Fa'a-Samoa</i>	Samoan way
<i>faiifeau</i>	pastor
<i>fale</i>	house
<i>feagaiga</i>	covenant
<i>fono</i>	meeting/council
<i>'ie toga</i>	fine mat
<i>ifoga</i>	traditional ceremonial apology
<i>itumalo</i>	district
<i>lotu</i>	Church
<i>mana</i>	power/efficacy
<i>matai</i>	chief
<i>nu'u</i>	village
<i>oloa</i>	material goods
<i>papalagi</i>	white men (European)
<i>poula</i>	sexually charged night dances
<i>siapo</i>	traditional Samoan bark cloth
<i>taupou</i>	virgin; high ranking lady

tautua

to serve

Kerisiano Fa'a-Samoa

Samoan Christianity

ABSTRACT

This thesis looks into the impact of the Samoan culture – *Fa'a-Samoa*, in the process of evangelization of the Western Pacific. Between 1839 and 1930, over 400 Samoan missionaries offered their service as agents of the London Missionary Society (LMS), in their quest to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Western Pacific. In their work, the Samoan missionaries applied their own interpretation of Christianity, known as *Kerisiano Fa'a-Samoa* (Samoan Christianity). This had a grave impact and lasting influence upon the people they served.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the contributions of Samoan missionaries, to the LMS Samoan mission to the Western Pacific. It investigates how the Samoan missionaries spread the Gospel to the Western Pacific from a Samoan perspective.

It is also an attempt to analyse the influence of *Fa'a-Samoa* (Samoan way) on LMS Samoan missions. It investigates how Christianity and *Fa'a-Samoa* intertwine, to develop the Samoan-Christian character of Samoan missionaries overseas. In this context, Christianity and *Fa'a-Samoa* became their two fold identity, which they applied to their mission works.

The arrival of Christianity in 1830 had transformed Samoan society. Since then, Samoans had adopted many influences, brought by Christianity and western cultures. This paper also highlights how the Samoan people managed this process of change.

To achieve this purpose, this thesis consists of three main Chapters. Chapter one looks into the context of *Fa'a-Samoa*. It investigates the similarities between some Christian teachings and some *Fa'a-Samoa* concepts, which are relevant to this undertaking.

Chapter two investigates the impact of Christianity on *Fa'a-Samoa* and vice versa. It focuses on the way *Fa'a-Samoa* was applied to Christianity to create a distinct Samoan Christian perspective, known as *Kerisiano Fa'a-Samoa*.

Chapter three examines some aspects of the LMS Samoan missions to the Western Pacific. It explores the method of evangelization imposed by the Samoan missionaries. It also includes an analysis of the impact of *Fa'a-Samoa* on the LMS Samoa mission works in Western Pacific.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This chapter examines some *Fa'a-Samoa* concepts that had influenced the makeup of a Samoan Christian. Christianity had merged with *Fa'a-Samoa* because of their similarities. Therefore, discussing these *Fa'a-Samoa* concepts will produce a window to view both the cultural and religious identity of the Samoan people. The chapter also looks into the context in which *Fa'a-Samoa* is nurtured and how it shapes the cultural mentality of a Samoan.

Fa'a-Samoa and Christianity

Since the arrival of Christianity in Samoa in 1830, *Fa'a-Samoa* has engaged in a major reorientation. That is, *Fa'a-Samoa* and Christian ideologies have been fused together to create this two-fold identity, a Samoan Christian. The European Christians' beliefs and customs had influenced almost every aspect of *Fa'a-Samoa*. Also, Samoans' own religious beliefs, political and social outlook changed, as Ian C. Campbell records:

When the stream of foreigners began to flow into the Pacific, changes in island cultures became inevitable.¹

However, the influences of Christianity did not totally negate the fundamental principles of *Fa'a-Samoa*. Instead, Christianity became part of *Fa'a-Samoa*, and this fusion was used like the old religion.² John Williams noted this fusion in 1832:

The changes that the Samoan people experienced after the arrival of Christianity in 1830 help shaped a two-fold identity for the Samoan people with the combination of *Fa'a-Samoa* and Christianity.³

¹ Ian C. Campbell, *A History of Pacific Islands*, (Canterbury: Canterbury University Press, 1989), 68.

² Malama Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 18.

³ John Williams, *Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, (London: Pasternoster Row, 1838), 328.

Accordingly, Christianity and *Fa'a-Samoa* have been moulded together in the mindset of every Samoan. For instance, the respect that the younger members of the congregation give to their elders and to the *faifeau* (pastor), is a reflection of the *Fa'a-Samoa* concept of *fa'aaloalo* (respect). This shows the inter-twined of *Fa'a-Samoa* and Christian values, on the lives of the Samoan people. Nurturing this two fold identity starts from the *aiga* (family).

The significance of the Aiga

A person's life is embedded in the family and village affairs, which creates the fundamental forms of social life.⁴ The basic social unit in this society is the family household, which provides an individual with identity, support, protection, status, and honour.⁵

The Samoan term *aiga* is the equivalent of the English word 'family.' The *aiga* can be a married couple to a large clan comprising of all descendants of a common ancestor.⁶ A group of different *aiga* would come together to form a *nu'u* (village). A number of these *nu'u* within the same geographical area would in turn form the *itumalo* (district). Daily activities and interactions between these different levels also reflect the same relationship that is practised within the *aiga*.

The *aiga* is headed by a *matai* (chief) and each member performs specific duties, contributing to its daily activities. The *matai*, as the leader and trustee of the *aiga* properties⁷ also represents the *aiga* in the village *fono* (council). This village council consists of all

⁴ Lisa S. Cahill, *Family: A Christian Perspective*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 19.

⁵ Michael F. Trainor, *The Quest for Home: The Household in Mark's Community*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 19.

⁶ Malama Meleisea, *Making of Modern Samoa*, (1987), 6.

⁷ Malama Meleisea, *Making of Modern Samoa*, (1987), 7.

matai of the village. It is the sole authority over village affairs and their decision is carried out by every group within the village set up.⁸

This familial and communal living is the centre of *Fa'a-Samoa*. Starting from the *aiga*, a Samoan develops an understanding of the interrelationship between its members. It is the ideal place where the young people learn from their elders, enhancing and sharpening their knowledge of *Fa'a-Samoa*. On the village level, the *matai* and the elders teach and discipline members of the community, in order to comply with community and *Fa'a-Samoa* protocols. They also make decisions pertaining to village affairs as Malama Meleisea writes:

Because the Samoans conceived of *Fa'a-Samoa* as a framework for action based upon the social structure of the *aiga* and *nu'u* and the authority of *matai* and *fono*, new practises, ideas and goods could be accepted and incorporated into it...⁹

Most importantly, the disciplinary part is not only to maintain order, but also, to nurture and to develop the young ones to become better leaders in the future. Faalepo Tuisuga-le-Taua summaries this:

It is in this setting that children are raised and learn the protocol of the *Fa'a-Samoa*. This learning process allowed everyone to know the right way to listen, talk, eat, stand and walk before others, especially the Samoan elders.¹⁰

It is within this setting where the values, integrity, pride and identity are embedded in the soul and mind of every Samoan. Ama'amalele Tofaeono also concurs that:

The *aiga* is the basic arena where the Samoan religio-cultural lifeway is cultivated and continues to be nurtured. It is an institution and a concept which informs the life of the community in all dimensions.¹¹

⁸ There is the *aumaga* (all untitled men of the village), who serves the village council. There is also the village of women (*auluma*), headed by the wives of the *matai*, and all the girls and women of the village belong to this group. The *auluma* also performs the wishes of the *matai*.

⁹ Malama Meleisea, *Making of Modern Samoa*, (1987), 17.

¹⁰ Faalepo T. A. Tuisuga-le-Taua, "Toifale – 'Pregnancy within the House' – A Pastoral Care Concern for the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa." Unpublished. (MTh Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2000), 38.

¹¹ Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-theology: Aiga – The household of life : A perspective from living myths and traditions of Samoa*, (Erlangen: Erlanger Verl. für Mission und Ökumene, 2000), 33.

How a Samoan conducts him/herself within or outside the community is not only a reflection of his/her up-bringing within the *aiga*, but also a reflection of his/her *aiga* as well.

Beside this concept of *fa'aaloalo*, other *Fa'a-Samoa* concepts like, *tautua* (service), *feagaiga* (covenant) and *tapuaiga* (support) also have roots in the context of the *aiga* and *nu'u*. These concepts underpin the pastor-congregation relationship from a Samoan perspective.

The Concept of Fa'aaloalo

The term *fa'aaloalo* is commonly translated as respect, but this translation alone cannot fully comprehend the deeper meaning of *fa'aaloalo*. As defined by Rev. George Pratt, the word is made up of the causative prefix *fa'a*, meaning 'doing something' or 'putting something together' and the noun *alo*, meaning 'to face'.¹² Therefore, the term can literally mean 'to do something face to face'.

Thus, *fa'aaloalo* is a two way process, whereby doing or saying something in respect of another person would be repaid back in kind. This reciprocity is maintained in the relationships between the *matai* and his *aiga*, brother and sister, *faiifeau* and his congregation, etc. Thus, *fa'aaloalo* is the essential element that holds relationships together and plays a vital role in solving disagreements, as Sam Kupa states:

...*fa'aaloalo* is an important concept in the *Fa'a-Samoa* that readily dictates a Samoan person's character, nature and relationships. That is, Samoans look at everything through the lens of *fa'aaloalo*. How activities are arranged, how one speaks to another, how people relate to each other and their actions is determined by this concept of *fa'aaloalo*.¹³

¹² George Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language*, 4th Edition, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977), 27.

¹³ Sam Kupa, *A Christological Perspective of the Samoan concept of Fa'aaloalo*, Unpublished. (BD Thesis, Malua Theological College, 2006), 7 – 8.

In summary, *fa'aaloalo* is the foundation of the *Fa'a-Samoa*. It plays a central role in maintaining the familial and communal living amongst the Samoan people, as Paulo Koria affirms:

...*fa'aaloalo* maybe simply defined as the principle, an attitude, a cultural value, a principle of social behaviour, a tradition custom and even an institutional practise and every Samoan person is nurtured by this concept.¹⁴

With *fa'aaloalo*, a Samoan knows his/her place within the community. *Fa'aaloalo* enables a Samoan person to treat others with due respect, especially the elders, the *matai* and the *faiifeau*. It is this *fa'aaloalo* that makes a Samoan truly Samoan.

The Concept of Tautua

This term is made up of two syllables: *tau* meaning 'to fight' and *tua* meaning 'behind'. So literally, *tautua* is 'to fight from behind'. However, the term implies the service or obligation that someone must undertake for someone else, like the *aiga* serving the *matai*.¹⁵ This service is not just merely 'serving' but serving with commitment, dedication and with much vigour and seal.¹⁶

The responsibility of the *matai* to his/her *aiga* can also be referred to as *tautua*. In this sense, the *matai* serves the *aiga* in the village council, as their representative. S/He must use all his knowledge and expertise¹⁷ to promote the *aiga* within the village and to defend its honour, whenever someone from his/her *aiga* is implicated in some kind of trouble.

¹⁴ Paulo Koria, "Moving Towards a Pacific Theology: Theologising with Concepts," *The Pacific Journal of Theology*, (Series II, Issue 22, 1999), 5 – 6.

¹⁵ The living arrangement in a Samoan *aiga* can give us an insight into the deeper meaning of *tautua*. A Samoan *aiga* would live in small huts called *fale*, which surround the *fale-tele* (big house), where the *matai* and/or *feagaiga* resides.

¹⁶ Sam Kupa, (2006), 10.

¹⁷ This knowledge and expertise is learned from serving the *matai* before him/her. To be promoted to be a *matai* is a blessing and reward for service rendered to the *matai* and to the *aiga* as well.

This *tautua* concept is also evident in the *faifeau-aulotu* (minister-congregation) relationship. The *aulotu* tends to every need of their *faifeau*, while the *faifeau* serves his congregation spiritually by preaching and living the Good News of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

However, performing one's *tautua* can be perceived differently. There is *tautua matavela* (service through burnt eyes), referring to a person sitting by the fire, preparing food for the *matai* and the *aiga*. It implies commitment and dedication, as noted by Michiko Ete-Lima:

This unique type of service is performed with much dedication and honour. What is notable about this servant-hood role is that the duties are performed in silence (*aunoa ma se leo*)...despite the degree of difficulty and hardship that is endured.¹⁸

*Tautua matavela*¹⁹ is thus, a self-sacrifice that a person performs for his *aiga*. This includes giving your very best to fulfil this obligation, without expecting anything in return.

The Concept of Feagaiga

The term *feagaiga* is derived from the root word *feagai* (to face something or someone). It describes the delicate relationship between the brother and his sister. It is a covenant that binds this cultural relationship, based on commitment and prestige.

In the *aiga*, the sister is considered sacred from the brother's perspective. This is because the sister, according to *Fa'a-Samoa*, has some sort of divine power to curse and/or to bless the brother, as Wightman J. Davidson writes:

Samoan culture recognised a special relationship between sister and brother. Brothers had an obligation to consider the interests of their sisters

¹⁸ Michiko Ete-Lima, *Jesus Christ the Feagaiga and the Nofo-tane: A Christological Perception of the Samoan Tama'ita'i*, Unpublished. (MTh Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2001), 27.

¹⁹ In contrast, *tautua pa'ō* (noisy service) implies a disgraceful *tautua*. It refers to a service that is performed unwillingly, forcefully and without *fa'aaloalo*. It can also mean a *tautua* that questions the decisions of the *matai*. It's a clear indication of a person who serves with less devotion and rebellious in nature.

and their sisters' children. Sisters were held to have the power of cursing their brothers and their descendants if this obligation were neglected.²⁰

As such, the brother is destined to care for his sister. He must sacrifice everything to fulfil this obligation. He must at all times and without hesitation respond and commit to his *feagaiga* with much respect.²¹ The brother is thus, bound in a life of service to his sister. It is a commitment that is founded upon the concepts of *fa'aaloalo* and *tautua*.

This *feagaiga* concept was adopted and applied to Christianity, where the *faiifeau* became the *feagaiga* between the congregation and God, as Va'a L. Feleise writes:

...understanding of the *feagaiga* system is vital to an understanding of *Fa'a-Samoa* because of its centrality in brother/sister and pastor/congregation relationships. The *feagaiga* system is the model where these and other social relationships are based.²²

When someone is referred to as a *feagaiga*, every Samoan will know the respect and obligation that one must give to that particular person. It highlights the importance of females and the *faiifeau* to all Samoans.

The Concept of Tapua'iga

Tapua'iga is made up of two distinct words: *tapu* – meaning 'to make sacred' and *aiga*. *Tapua'iga* or *tapua'i* has a variety of sociological meanings like, 'to sit waiting for success in war or in sickness', or 'to give something to bring success' and 'to offer religious worship'.²³ Fanaafi Aiono describes this process as making a spiritual connection with God for another person.²⁴ That is, it is an act of asking God for His blessings upon someone's wellbeing and success.

²⁰ Wightman J. Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 23.

²¹ F. Tapuai, *A comparative Study of the Samoan and Hebrew concepts of the Covenant*, Unpublished. (BD Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1972), 8.

²² Va'a L. Felise, *Fa'a-Samoa Continues and Change: A study of Samoan migration in Australia*, Unpublished. (MD Thesis, Australian National University, 1995), 3.

²³ Ama'amalele Tofaeono, (2000), 25.

²⁴ Fanaafi Aiono, *Tapua'i – Samoan Worship*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2003), 49.

The act of *tapua'i* is performed by the *aiga* or the *nu'u* when members are to be parted for a particular purpose. As described by Tofaeono, the *tapua'iga* in its essential is divinely motivated:

...the *tapua'iga* was held always prior, during and after a communal activity. For example, when a group of villagers prepared to go hunting, a *tapua'iga* would take place before they left, and while they were engaged in this activity, the *tapua'iga* was held by other members, led especially by the elders, including chiefs and others present. The villagers would remain silent, patiently awaiting the return of the group...²⁵

While the *aiga*, or *nuu* performs the *tapuaiga*, it motivates and obligates the person(s), for whom the *tapuaiga* is carried out, to perform. It encourages them to succeed and to bring victory for the *tapuaiga*.

For those Samoan missionaries overseas, this *tapuaiga* encouraged them to achieve their objectives, despite the hardships they faced. Failure to do so would bring shame to their *aiga*, *nuu*, the LMS Samoan Mission Enterprises and their *tapuaiga*.

Conclusion

Christian and *Fa'a-Samoa* ideologies had merged together to produce a Samoan Christian. This two-fold identity dictates how a Samoan walks, talks and interacts with not only members of his/her *aiga* and *nuu*, but with other people as well. Although this two-fold identity is nurtured on the similarities of these two separate ideals, its foundation is based upon some important Samoan concepts as discussed. Applying these concepts to Christianity is the focus of the next chapter.

²⁵ Ama'amalele Tofaeono, (2000), 30. The same *tapuaiga* was done for other activities like sports, fishing, travelling or even driving a car in the contemporary setting.

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

This chapter shows how these Samoans concepts, as discussed earlier, were adapted to Christianity. In effect, it was the contextualisation of Christianity to build a distinct Samoan perspective called *Kerisiano Fa'a-Samoa*. That is, Christianity was practised using *Fa'a-Samoa*.

There is also a brief summary of the arrival of Christianity in Samoa and how *Fa'a-Samoa* contributes to its rapid spread throughout the Samoan islands. I will also examine the fusion of Christianity and *Fa'a-Samoa*, giving rise to the status of the *faifeau*. The objective is to trace the development of a Samoan Christian's mind set.

The Arrival of Christianity to Samoa

On the 24th of August, 1830, John Williams and Charles Barff, from the LMS, brought Christianity to Samoa, on board the Messenger of Peace. They were accompanied by eight native teachers from Tahiti and Rarotonga, along with a Samoan couple, Fauea and Puaseisei.²⁶

When they arrived at Sapapalii, Malietoa Vainuupo was not there. He was engaged in a war against A'ana district, on the island of Upolu, to avenge the death of one of his allies, Tamafaiga, who was killed by the people of Aana. Malietoa was then informed that the *papalagi* (white men) had arrived with a new *lotu* (religious belief).

After negotiating with the European missionaries, Malietoa declared, as recorded by Kenape T. Faletese:

²⁶ Puaseisei came from the village of Safune, Savaii, where they first dropped anchor, rested and then set sail for Sapapalii, Savaii, the village of Malietoa Vainuupo, who happened to be related to Fauea.

This is a blessed day of my life and I am very happy to live to see it. I accepted the teachers (native teachers) and I promise I will take care and keep them safe. In the future we will live together as one *aiga* and I want you (Williams and Barff) to do the same.²⁷

This declaration signified the enthusiasm of Samoan leader(s) to accept the new *lotu*. Samoans turned up in great numbers to listen to the teaching of the Gospel and within two month, Williams writes:

The acceptance of the Christian teachers was not this easy in any other island. The Samoan men and women have embraced the teachers with open arms, they socialise and compete on who will offer them (native teachers) the best.²⁸

Williams' observation showcased the essence of *fa'aaloalo*, *tautua*, and the hospitality of Samoans. They welcomed their new friends or *aiga* with open arms, as *Fa'a-Samoa* and Christianity became acquaintance.

The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and Roman Catholic priests arrived in 1835 and 1845 respectively and all Samoans were quickly converted to Christianity.

Fa'a-Samoa and the Spread of Christianity

According to Oka Fauolo, Samoa was one, if not the only country in the Pacific where Christianity had spread smoothly, without shedding blood.²⁹ This was due to the influence of *Fa'a-Samoa*. Also, Samoans could easily relate Christian teachings to their cultural context. For example, when the missionaries taught the Samoans to love thy neighbours, it was in effect, the same as their concepts of *fa'aaloalo*, *tautua* and *feagaiga*.

²⁷ Kenape T. Faletoese, *O le Tala Fa'asolopito o le Ekalesia Samoa [LMS]*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1959), 10. Translations are mine.

²⁸ John Williams, (1838), 11.

²⁹ Personal Interview with Reverend Elder Oka Fau'olo, 22nd May, 2011. 12:30pm. Rev. Fau'olo was a former principal of Malua Theological College and currently the Chairman of Samoa National Council of Churches.

The Christian principles of forgiving, repenting and salvation, were similar to the Samoan concept of *ifoga*.³⁰ This similarity between *Fa'a-Samoa* and Christian teachings made it easier for Samoans to accept Christianity and they adopted it as part of their *Fa'a-Samoa*. However, there were also other areas where the two cultures did not agree, as will be discussed later on.

The familial and communal settings also contributed to the quick and wide spread conversion of Samoans. When a *matai* was converted, his whole *aiga* would follow suit. For example, when Malietoa was converted, his *aiga* soon followed and they all became preachers of the Gospel. He took on a biblical name Tavita (David) during his baptism and confessed before a large gathering, saying:

I worship Jehovah, and though the *aitu* (spirits) will be disappointed with me for abandoning them, Jehovah will protect me. If I were to be saved, surely you will be also and then must follow me. And if not, then I will fall as a sacrifice for their revenge so that you will be saved.³¹

Mass Samoan conversions resulted in the destruction of many of their former gods.³² Many *nu'u* and *aiga* followed Malietoa's lead. They accepted Christianity and were eager for Christian teachers to teach them.

The establishment of Mission Centres

Christianity quickly spread throughout Samoa and everyone wanted to know more about the new *lotu*.³³ When Williams arrived back from Rarotonga in 1832, he visited two

³⁰ *Ifoga* comes from the root *ifo*, meaning to bow. This Samoa custom is still practised by the Samoan people today. When a person commits a serious crime – murder, adultery, destruction of property, etc., the *aiga* of the accused will seek forgiveness from the *aiga* of the victim by performing an *ifoga*. The *matai* and the whole *aiga* of the accused will sit outside, in front of the *fale-tele* of the victim's *aiga*, covering themselves with *ie toga* (fine mat) as a sign of remorse. The *aiga* of the accused will sit for as long as it takes until the *matai* of the victim's *aiga* remove the *ie-toga* and invite them into the *fale-tele* as a sign of forgiveness.

³¹ John Williams, (1838) 12.

³² Kenape T. Faletose, (1959), 12. The Samoan people worshiped many gods including the *fe'e* (octopus), *tuna* (eel), *laumei* (turtle), etc. The white missionaries convinced the Samoans that these were not gods. They demonstrated this by cooking and eating them.

centres at Amoa and Malava, Savaii, where the teachers had already conducted services for the people. At both locations, *matai* from neighbouring villages presented Williams with gifts and begged him for their own missionaries.³⁴

This demand resulted with the LMS's decision in 1835, to bring George Pratt and Samuel Wilson from Tahiti, to assist the Samoan internal mission.³⁵ In 1836, six more European missionaries with their wives arrived, with another three arriving in 1838.³⁶ By 1843, there were already five Mission centres in Savaii, six in Upolu, one in Manono and two in Tutuila.³⁷ In 1844, Malua Theological Institute was established to train Samoans to be *faifeau* in local villages as well as mission works to neighbouring islands.

The Impact of Christianity on Fa'a-Samoa

The European missionaries' approach to Samoans was 'paternalistic' in nature. They imposed changes on some parts of *Fa'a-Samoa* that they perceived to be un-Christian or that did not conform to their European standards. They instructed the Samoans to wear appropriate attire and to change their hair style.³⁸ In addition, the men used to do the cooking for the *aiga* but the missionaries convinced the Samoans that cooking was the females' responsibilities.

There were also other areas of *Fa'a-Samoa*, which contradicted the Gospel, and were thus prohibited, like wars, tattooing and *poula*.³⁹ Other prohibitions included the elimination of some aspects of *Fa'a-Samoa* marriage ceremony, which ethically and morally did not

³³ Kenape T. Faletese, 1959, 14. There was an account of a man named Amoamo, who sailed all the way from Pagopago to Sapapalii on a canoe, to listen and to bring the Gospel back to his people, every fortnight.

³⁴ John Williams, *Missionary Enterprises*, (London: John Snow, 1837), 115.

³⁵ Oka Fauolo, *Ola i Vavega o le Alofa Laveai*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2005), 20

³⁶ Kenape T. Faletese, 1959, 16.

³⁷ Ruta Sinclair, *Polynesian missions in Melanesia*, (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1982), 8.

³⁸ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987), 68. He relayed that Samoan men used to have long hair, pinned to a knot on top of their heads while the women usually had theirs cut short.

³⁹ Sexually charged night dances.

conform to Christian doctrines.⁴⁰ Also, pre-Christian Samoa allowed paramount chiefs to re-marry prominent women, in order to elevate their chiefly status. Therefore, those *matai* who wanted to become Christians were asked to choose only one wife.

However, some introduced changes were adopted into *Fa'a-Samoa*. Meleisea relays one example of this:

...after 1830, the custom of exchanging *oloa*, men's product of food, tools and money, for *toga*, women's product of mats, *tapa* and '*ie toga*, at weddings, was replaced by a mission custom. When a young pastor married they were presented with a dowry of furniture by their wives' relatives.⁴¹

Thus, European Christian culture had been fused into *Fa'a-Samoa*. It highlights the flexibility of *Fa'a-Samoa* to accommodate appropriate changes, which had been made distinctively Samoan. The Samoan saying: *E sui faiga a'e tumau fa'avae* (the way of doing things can change but the foundation remains) underpins this process. That is, changes can be accommodated without destroying the essence of *Fa'a-Samoa*, as Jennifer Tilby observes:

...since Samoa came into contact with Europeans, they have been able to graft many parts of European culture into the *Fa'a-Samoa*. This was done without destroying the basic structure of their culture. Their enthusiasms for formal education, for European medicine and for Christianity are important examples of the grafting.⁴²

Samoans were eager to learn new ideas that would benefit the community as a whole. Their enthusiasm to acquire wisdom and knowledge, and the material wealth of the Europeans, was all part of their passion in accepting the Gospel.⁴³ But, it also made the church popular in each *nu'u*.

⁴⁰One aspect of this wedding ceremony, which the missionaries eliminated, was the public testing of the *taupou's* virginity, to determine her innocent and purity.

⁴¹Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga*, (1987), 69.

⁴²Jennifer Tilby, *Fa'a-Samoa*, (Christchurch: Action Publication, 1976), 49.

⁴³John Williams, (1837), 111. But, this willingness to learn went too far, as highlighted by one of the Rarotongan teachers, who asked John Williams in 1832 to baptise his newly born baby privately because the Samoans were imitating their every move. The teachers feared that the Samoans might do the same to their children.

The church became a new centre for religious and cultural activities from 1830 onwards. This was perhaps, one of the most important impacts of Christianity on *Fa'a-Samoa*. Previously, the *aiga* was the primary focus of Samoan societies, where the *matai* acted as the mediator between the people and their gods. However, the *faiifeau* took over that responsibility as God's *feagaiga*, which made the *faiifeau*, a person of very high standing within the *nu'u*.

The Rise in Status of the Faiifeau

During their trainings at Mission Centres and later in Malua Theological Institute, the *faiifeau* and their wives⁴⁴ were also introduced to the European way of living. As a result, they became role models in each *nu'u*, where the people would imitate and learn from them the basics of this new lifestyle. This became a criteria as every *nu'u* wanted a young pastor with a wife, who could teach their wives and daughters something.⁴⁵ Young Samoan ladies were encouraged to live with the *faiifeau* and his wife to learn as much as they could. The house of the *faiifeau* soon became an ideal setting for learning, getting together and partaking in other religious activities.

With the church becoming more and more the focal point in the Samoan culture, it also saw the elevation in status of the *faiifeau* in each *nu'u*. He became one of the most important individuals in the *nu'u*. He was respected as a *matai*, or even more so,⁴⁶ and the Samoan people saw their relationship with the *faiifeau* through the lens of *fa'aaloalo*, *tautua* and *feagaiga*. Each village was bound by the obligations and demands of these *Fa'a-Samoa* concepts towards the *faiifeau*. In this context, the *nu'u* as a whole was expected to offer their *tautua* to the *faiifeau*, as an *aiga* to their *matai*.

⁴⁴ Most of the *faiifeau*'s wives who entered Malua, were trained at Papauta Girls School, where they first learned these domestic skills, but later enhanced at Malua with the help of missionaries' wives.

⁴⁵ George Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, (Papakura, R. McMillan, 1984), 126.

⁴⁶ A *faiifeau*'s honourific address is *ao o fa'alpega* (top/head of all honourific addresses). It is a reflection of their elevated status within Samoan societies.

Conclusion

The respect and honour that the Samoan people ascribed to Christianity was second to none. To them, their service and dedication to Christianity reflects without their *Fa'a-Samoa*. Through *Fa'a-Samoa*, Christianity becomes a precious ornament that every Samoan should cherish. Ultimately, accepting and practicing Christianity through the expectations and demands of *Fa'a-Samoa* is the only affirmation of a true Samoan Christian. This mentality is known as *Kerisiano fa'a-Samoa*. Through this perspective, the *faiifeau* becomes a very important and respected person.

The Samoan missionaries to the Western Pacific took with them this Samoan Christian perspective, with grave consequences on their mission fields.

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

The successful introduction of Christianity to Samoa was highlighted by the willingness of Samoans to spread the Gospel to Western Pacific in 1839, with only nine years of Christian experience. This chapter looks into the impact of *Fa'a-Samoa* on Samoan missionaries during their mission works. Its aim is to identify the role of Samoan Christian missionaries and their contributions to the evangelisation of Western Pacific.

A brief background information on the LMS strategy of employing island missionaries is also provided. However, this chapter focuses mainly on the impact of the Samoan missionaries in their mission work, and how they approached their work, using their Samoan Christian (*Kerisiano Fa'a-Samoa*) perspective. This is not at all judgemental, but to evaluate its effectiveness and the impact on those they served.

Island Missionaries

John Williams' effort to use 'island missionaries' in mission work proved to be very effective. From the 1820s, when Tahitian teachers began spreading Christianity to the Cook Islands and Tonga, the use of Island agents had become an important part of Protestant missionary practice.⁴⁷ This practice had certain advantages that were exploited by the LMS European missionaries.

The Pacific islanders were capable of learning other Pacific languages much quicker than the white missionaries. This idea was based on the similarities between Polynesian cultures and languages. In addition, island missionaries or 'native teachers' as they were

⁴⁷ John Williams, (1837), 11.

referred to, could adapt easily to the living conditions on different islands than the European missionaries. There were also economic reasons. The costs of supplying and funding white missionaries from London were too expensive.⁴⁸ Therefore, LMS's vision of expanding the Gospel would have faced difficulties, if it were not for the engagement of island missionaries.

This strategy started in 1821 when Papeiha, a native of Raiatea from the Society Islands, was sent by Williams for mission work to Aitutaki, Rarotonga.⁴⁹ It marked the beginning of a successful policy of employing island missionaries.

In 1839, the LMS Samoan Church started its own missionary enterprise to Western Pacific. Many Samoans volunteered to carry the light of Christ to other dark places in the Pacific.⁵⁰

The LMS Samoa Mission Enterprises targeted the Western Pacific. Starting from Southern Vanuatu, they worked their way through Loyalty Islands, Ellice Islands (Tuvalu), New Caledonia, Island of Pine and up to Papua New Guinea (PNG), where they ended their evangelization work in 1977. Other Pacific Islands that they evangelised included Tokelau, Niue, Kiribati and Rotuma. By 1939, over 400 Samoan missionaries had offered their service to take the Gospel to Western Pacific.⁵¹

The impact of Fa'a-Samoa

The process of evangelization brought changes to those affected.⁵² Christianity replaced traditional religious ideas of the people it came into contact with. Similarly, Samoan missionaries overseas were *agents of changes* on a grand scale. As they were often the first foreign settlers in many of the places they went to, they invariably initiated the process of

⁴⁸ John Williams, (1837), 11.

⁴⁹ John Williams, (1837), 10 – 15.

⁵⁰ Kenape T. Faletose, (1959), 12.

⁵¹ Felelerika U. Nokise, *The role of LMS Samoan Missionaries in the Evangelization of the South West Pacific*, Unpublished. (PhD. Thesis, Australian National University, 1983), 304 – 327.

⁵² Refer to Footnote 1 and Footnote 3

disintegration of traditional society,⁵³ replacing it with Christian beliefs. However, Samoan missionaries taught indigenous people their own understanding of *Kerisiano Fa'a-Samoa*. This was deeply rooted in the demands and expectations of the *Fa'a-Samoa*, as Feleterika Nokise states:

To help understand these men and women and their work in general, it is important to look at their background, their conviction, training, their standing within the Samoan society, what their society expected of them, because apart from their Christian beliefs and faith, these men and women brought with them attitudes and expectations shaped by this background.⁵⁴

Samoan missionaries were more close to the indigenous people than their European counterparts. This gave them an aura of leadership, which was similar to their status back home. However, they were criticised for 'looking down' on the natives or even 'lorded' over them.⁵⁵ Their forceful nature in imposing what they thought was best for the people, did not meet the European missionaries' expectations of them, or their approval. But knowing their role and what was expected of them back in Samoa – the *tapuaiga*, the Samoan missionaries applied all their trainings and their *Fa'a-Samoa*, to achieve their mission.

As with the European missionaries' approach to Samoa, Samoan missionaries took to their tasks with a paternalistic mentality. Acting like parents, they were very demanding in instructing the local population, of what they thought was best, based on their *Fa'a-Samoa*. During this initial stage, they were criticised for being heavy handed or harsh. But, as their relationships improved throughout the years, the indigenous people, especially the Papuans, realised the sincerity of their Samoan missionaries for them to be good Christians. They later referred to these Samoan missionaries as their 'parents'.

⁵³ Feleterika U. Nokise, (1983), 135.

⁵⁴ Ruta Sinclair, *The LMS Samoan Missionaries along the Papuan Coast*, Unpublished. (BA. Thesis, University of Papua New Guinea, 1980), 19.

⁵⁵ Doug Munro and Andrew Thornley, *The Covenant Makers*, (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1996), 18.

Samoan missionaries worked closely and lived with their hosts in their village environment. In such settings, they taught *Kerisiano Fa'a-Samoa*. They displayed and acted in ways that were normally associated with life in their own *nu'u*, back in Samoa. They kept their houses clean and hygienic. They taught local people in Samoan handicrafts, Samoan cooking, Samoan songs and even sharing their belongings. They also expected the local population to provide for them, as if they were in Samoa. Unfortunately, that did not happen initially and it became a source of frustration.

By living in close contact with the people, the Samoans were able to observe their traditions, learned their dialect and were familiar with their everyday living, as well as getting to know them on a personal level. Most importantly, in this way, the Samoans were able to effect changes, which would comply with Christian teachings, especially and more often, changes that complied with the expectations of *Kerisiano Fa'a-Samoa*.⁵⁶ In some cases, changes in indigenous cultures took place under the justification that the old ways were contrary to the teachings of Christ.

Various European writings reported the role of Samoan missionaries as agents of religious and social change, which reflected the ability of Samoan missionaries to undertake changes, where they saw fit. Unfortunately, editions of *Sulu Samoa*⁵⁷ from 1839 to 1880 do not appear to have survived, thus making it difficult to verify these accounts and to determine how the early Samoan missionaries viewed and treated traditional religions during this period. However, editions from 1880 to 1930 are available, shedding light as to how they dealt with these situations.

In these accounts, most of the Samoan missionaries felt that the only way to establish God's kingdom in these lands, was to rid of all idol (godly) images worshiped by the

⁵⁶ Feleterika U. Nokise, (1983), 136.

⁵⁷ LMS Samoa Church official magazine since 1839.

indigenous people. Those who worked in PNG wrote general accounts of the physical forms of these gods, ranging from carved wooden figures to stones, to animals and human beings, and the influences these images had on the people. For example, Timoteo, who worked in Kabadi, PNG, from 1900–1909, reported the effects of a stone image on the local people:

The effect of this stone (Nebu) on the minds of the people is truly amazing. Everyone fears it. No one sleeps by himself in the night, or goes to the bush alone. Every death appears to be explained by the existence of such a stone, no matter what caused it.⁵⁸

In a similar occasion, Apineru who took up post in Vatorata/Daru, PNG, from 1906–1909, explained how a man carried around a bag of stone believing to possess the *mana* of the gods:

If I take it to the bush and tie it to my net, it will call to a pig to come immediately, so that I may see its power.⁵⁹

In another letter, Timoteo wrote how a whole village was overwhelmed with fear of death when a snake, which was chasing a small pig to the centre of the village, was believed by some to be the embodiment of their sacred god Oarove.⁶⁰

These accounts also highlighted how Samoan missionaries combated these traditional religious beliefs. Whenever the opportunity arose to challenge these existing beliefs, they often acted swiftly without hesitation. An interesting account was written by George Turner, concerning the work of Ioane in the Ellice Islands in 1875, where he confronted and succeeded in the abolishment of pagan religious beliefs:

...five of the chiefs took their seats surrounded by all the people, and Ioane was sent for. When he came, he removed the sacred necklaces from these men, which were supposed to offer them special protection from the gods. It was considered death for anyone to remove them and the people stared in astonishment, expecting him to fall down dead. The necklaces were removed, the spell was broken he said: ‘Let us pray’...

⁵⁸ Timoteo, “Letter from Kabadi,” *Sulu Samoa*, (October, 1904), 86 – 87. Translations are mine.

⁵⁹ Apineru, “An account of the Angas Inland Mission in Kalaigolo, Papua,” *Sulu Samoa*, (December, 1905), 135. Translations are mine.

⁶⁰ Timoteo, “Letter from Kabadi,” *Sulu Samoa*, (August, 1909), 121 – 22. Translations are mine.

On another incident in the temple, Ioane handled carefully the skulls as he took them from their places, and respectfully covered them with a piece of Samoan native cloth (*siapo*).⁶¹

Michael Goldsmith and Doug Munro misinterpreted Ioane's actions by suggesting that the *siapo* used by Ioane to cover the sacred skulls signified a process of 'neutralising their power or to encompass them with power object from his own culture.'⁶² According to Goldsmith and Munro, it seemed that the *siapo* had some sort of spiritual significance. However, Ioane's action highlighted his up-bringing and identity as a Samoan Christian. As a Christian, he believed that the shield of the Gospel would protect him from harm. As a Samoan, he handled the sacred skulls according to his understanding of *fa'aaloalo*. Covering the skulls with *siapo* before they were buried was a symbol of respect, care and love for the deceased, according to the *Fa'a-Samoa*.

Samoan missionaries worked hard in breaking down local traditional religious beliefs, which contradicted the Gospel. But, as soon as these beliefs were overcome, there was progress in their work. In fact, as part of their training, John Williams instructed them to cast down idols and lewd dances, and to stop people from going in a state of nudity.⁶³ Samoan missionaries understood these instructions well for some of their own night dances (*poula*) in Samoa were prohibited.

However, the ability of Samoan missionaries to break down traditional religious beliefs made them enemies of local sorcerers and priests, who benefited from keeping these beliefs alive. These sorcerers would demand large payments from families of the afflicted, so that they could be healed with their magic and superstition. This was witnessed by Timoteo:

During 1907, one of the Oarove people became ill with fever and headache. He belonged to a wealthy family. A priest who specialised in prayers

⁶¹ George Turner, *Journal*, (University of London, 1876), 27 – 29.

⁶² Michael Goldsmith & Doug Munro, "Conversion and Church Formation in Tuvalu," *Journal of Pacific History 1890 – 1917*, (Vol. 14, 3rd Edition, 1990), 48 – 49.

⁶³ David Wetherell, "Pioneers and Patriarchs: Samoans in a non-conformist district in Papua," *Journal of Pacific History 1890 – 1917*, (Vol. 15, 2nd Edition, 1980), 134.

visited him and informed his family that there was no way he could recover again, unless they paid him well since it was a serious illness. The family assembled the payment of food and other goods. After praying for the sick man, he left with all his acquired goods.⁶⁴

These sorcerers and priests were also the leading figures in blaming the missionaries for epidemics and persuaded the local people to kill them. In 1843, Apela, Samuela along with his wife and daughter were killed in Fotuna because they were blamed for an epidemic that killed many locals.⁶⁵ Taniela and Lasalo who worked in Erromanga, nearly suffered the same fate in 1842, but were rescued just in time by the missionary ship. These sorcerers and priests saw the missionaries as a threat to their activities because they discredited the validity of their activities. Samoan missionaries however, were unfazed with these threats.

In some cases, opposition from these sorcerers encouraged Samoan missionaries to continue. Noa and Tauga recalled the difficulties they faced in Kunie (New Caledonia) in 1843. Four warriors waited outside their gate in order to attack them. When they saw someone walking towards them from the missionaries' house, they ambushed him, thinking it was one of the missionaries. The attackers did not hear any noise or yelling from the person they were attacking. Fearing that it was a ghost, they fled. All four of them became sick and died later on.⁶⁶

According to Turner, Noa and Tauga escaped death many times. But these stories and many more from different mission fields where Samoan missionaries worked, revealed their steadfastness and courage in fulfilling their mission, even if it cost them their lives. This was due to their *tautua* for the Lord, as well as for the *tapuaiga* back home.

⁶⁴ Timoteo, (1909), 121 – 22. Translations are mine.

⁶⁵ Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society*, (London: Oxford Uni. Press, 1899), 405.

⁶⁶ George Turner, (1861), 418 – 419.

Samoaan missionaries also dealt with social behaviour, especially personal relationship between parents and children, as observed by Fa'asi'u, who worked in Morabe (PNG), from 1893 to 1917:

The children do not love their parents when the parents reach old age. They do not look after them unlike the type of bond that exists between parents and children in Samoa. The parents, though old and weak, still have to crawl around in search of food. When the children married, they left their parents and searched for food only for themselves and their wives. It is incredible how bad this custom is here.⁶⁷

Fa'asi'u's observation relayed the individualistic lifestyle of the Papuans, as compared to the caring and sharing relationship within the Samoan *aiga*. According to *Fa'a-Samoa*, the elderly are the most important people within every *aiga*, and taking good care of them will surely bring blessings upon the *aiga*.⁶⁸ With this firm belief, Samoan missionaries were able to influence and changed Papuans' mentality towards such personal relationships. Spiritual knowledge and their pride in *Fa'a-Samoa*, were factors for the changes Samoan missionaries made and explanations they gave.⁶⁹

This attitude of Samoans was further highlighted in the way they influenced the distribution of food in Niue. It is generally acknowledged that the present day custom of giving food to the pastor was started by Samoan missionaries.⁷⁰ There are also accounts from Gilbert Islands that reflect the impact of *Kerisian Fa'a-Samoa* on the indigenous people. Tema, who took up post in Beru in 1895, defended his actions against accusations from a Catholic missionary. They had accused Samoan missionaries of asking people to contribute food and other material things for them.

⁶⁷ Fa'asi'u, "Some news from New Guinea," *Sulu Samoa*, (December, 1893), 244. Translations are mine.

⁶⁸ A Samoan saying: *E afua mai mauga manuia o nu'u*, (Blessings for the *nu'u* originates from the mountains), can help explain this *Fa'a-Samoa* belief. The mountains here refer to leaders, especially elders, whose blessings come with *mana*.

⁶⁹ Feleterika U. Nokise, (1983), 148.

⁷⁰ Feleterika U. Nokise, (1983), 153.

We tried to explain the nature of Church offerings and donations to the people, as these things are commanded by God. People must give offerings to Him. ‘You must also give my servants their due pay for their work’.⁷¹

Tema’s writings serve as another classic example of how Samoan missionaries imposed their *Kerisiano Fa’a-Samoa*, which was justified with biblical accounts. This is in line with Nokise’s statement that “by stressing the importance of authority invested in their position as *faiifeau*, Samoan missionaries skilfully manipulated the demands of their *Fa’a-Samoa* as an essential ingredient of Christian faith they were offering to the people.”⁷²

In Tuvalu, Samoan missionaries achieved similar treatment as that of a *feagaiga*, back home.⁷³ They encouraged the formation of *feitu* (sides) in villages as competitive units. Villages were divided into two *feitu*, separated by an area on which stood the church.⁷⁴ In doing so, Samoan missionaries were able to bring together various factions into larger and uniting settlements. The eagerness of Tuvaluans for education made Samoan missionaries equal in status of that of the *aliki* (chief). It also meant that the people would provide for the material needs of their missionaries. They provided food and even giving the missionaries money. Each congregation also erected a pastor’s house. These activities were reflections of Samoan missionaries’ own *feagaiga* system.⁷⁵

In PNG, Samoans shared their belongings especially their food with Papuans, not only to demonstrate Christian love and sharing, but as an aspect of their *Fa’a-Samoa*.⁷⁶ European missionaries saw this as a way of Samoans trying to buy prestige from the people. However, just as Christianity is all about sharing one’s belongings with the needy, these actions by

⁷¹ Tema, “Report from Beru,” *Sulu Samoa*, (October, 1895), 147. Translations are mine.

⁷² Personal interview with Rev. Dr. Feleterika Nokise, 12 June, 2011. 12.30p.m. Rev. Nokise is currently the Principal of Pacific Theological College, Suva, Fiji.

⁷³ Doug Munro and Andrew Thornley, (1996), 130.

⁷⁴ I. Brady, “Kinship Reciprocity in the Ellice Islands,” *Journal of Polynesian Society*, (Vol. LXXXI, No.3, 1972), 45 – 57.

⁷⁵ Doug Munro and Andrew Thornley, (1996), 131.

⁷⁶ George Brown, *Melanesians and Polynesians: Their life history described and compared*, (London: Oxford Uni. Press, 1910), 20.

Samoa missionaries were normal to them, considering their own upbringing, in their communal societies. These practises were all part of Samoan missionaries' desire to instil amongst the indigenous people, a sense of belonging and treating others with care and affection. These concepts were rooted in the *Fa'a-Samoa*.

In a report by Apelu, who stationed in Kwato (PNG) in 1899, signs of *Kerisiano Fa'a-Samoa* began to impact the people during his mission.

People are now beginning to understand brotherly love. Their usual practice is to pay for anything they receive, to sell anything they give away. But now, they are beginning to give away things without asking for payment, and they have done this for us, at times when we are not well. They are looking after us now with much love.⁷⁷

Mataio, who worked in Saroa (PNG) in 1898, also witnessed this trend.

The village where I am working has achieved some understanding of the Gospel, evident in their loving attitude towards each other and to us. Evidence of the latter is their willingness to give us some of their food without payment. Many have attended worship and school and as a result many can read.⁷⁸

Towards the turn of the century, relationships between Samoan missionaries and local people improved. Their response, especially Papuans toward Samoan missionaries progressed from resentment during early periods, to a more cohesive one over the years. During the initial stage of evangelization, Papuans feared the man who could invoke the spirits; hence, they obeyed and conformed to the Samoan Pastor's ideas on how the village should be run. They thought that Samoans were more powerful than their sorcerers and that misfortune and harm would come upon them if they offended Samoans.

One of the most influential aspects of *Fa'a-Samoa* upon the local people was the language. Instructions were initially given in the Samoan language. Samoan words

⁷⁷ Apelu, "An account concerning progress in Kwato, Papua," *Sulu Samoa*, (March, 1899), 184. Translations are mine.

⁷⁸ Mataio, "Report from Saroa," *Sulu Samoa*, (August, 1898), 105. Translations are mine.

infiltrated the local language, debasing to some extent the purity of the spoken language.⁷⁹ This usage of the Samoan language was further reinforced by naming newly built schools and churches after some important feature of the Samoan Church. For example, a school in Arorae was not only modelled after Malua, but was also named Maluafou (new Malua).⁸⁰ One of the churches in Torres Strait was named 'Sulu Samoa'.⁸¹ In other mission fields, the Samoan language completely dominated the spoken vernacular of the people as in the case of Tokelau and Ellice Islands.⁸² Mrs. David affirms this domination with a description of the situation in Funafuti:

Almost every man, woman and child in this island can read and write in the Samoan language...the Bible, hymn books and school books in the Samoan language were supplied to the mission school.⁸³

This meant that Ellice Islanders adopted the Samoan language to be their official language. The impact of the Samoan language in modern day Tuvalu was confirmed by Rev. Nukulaelae Iati, who was born and raised up in Nukulaelae. His parents named him after their mission station where they worked from 1942 to 1952. Rev. Nukulaelae described his early childhood memories as growing up in an environment, very identical to Samoa. The language the Tuvaluans spoke, their dances and other cultural activities were very much the same as Samoa.⁸⁴

Samoans also influenced traditional songs and dances of the indigenous people. Any of these activities that had sexual connotations or related to traditional religious beliefs were suppressed by the Samoans. New songs and tunes were all taught in the Samoan language,

⁷⁹ T. David, *Funafuti or Three Months on a Coral Island: An Unscientific account on a Scientific Expedition*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1899), 185.

⁸⁰ Mariott, "Report of Visitation to the North West Outstations", *Sulu Samoa*, (August, 1898), 101.

⁸¹ *Sulu Samoa*, (February, 1902), 38.

⁸² Feleterika Nokise, (personal interview), 12 June, 2011. 12.30p.m.

⁸³ T. David, (1899), 186.

⁸⁴ Personal interview with Rev. Nukulaelae Iati, 24 May, 2011. 8.00p.m.

which emphasised the greatness of the Samoan Church or the importance of *Fa'a-Samoa*.⁸⁵ Iotamo wrote about this when he was invited to the opening of Finau's⁸⁶ house in the Torres Strait. He reported that all the hymns and songs, sung during the celebration were all in Samoan, and they were beautifully sung by the locals.⁸⁷

Conclusion

Wherever Samoan missionaries worked, they had an impact upon the indigenous people's way of life. This is clearly evident in the writings from this period. Ranging from social activities such as songs and sports, Samoans also contributed to the improvement of health, education, economic and domestic needs of the local people. Their role as Christian leaders and by living amongst the people, they were able to impose changes to the lives of the people they came into contact with. This led to various criticisms from different quarters.

Nevertheless, their influence and contribution to these societies were significant. The impact of their *Fa'a-Samoa* and the aggressiveness of their methods were due to their theological training and a strong cultural background. But what more could be asked of them? After all, they toiled the soil and planted the seed of Christianity in these dark places, as well as improving the lives of the people of Western Pacific.

⁸⁵ Feleterika U. Nokise, (1983), 156.

⁸⁶ Finau was a Samoan missionary who worked in Torres Strait, from 1890 to 1892.

⁸⁷ Iotamo, "A report from Torres Strait," *Sulu Samoa*, (October, 1895), 201. Translations are mine.

CONCLUSION

The process of evangelization brought changes to those affected, along with the displacement of traditional religious ideas with those of Christianity. It happened in Samoa as well as the places where Samoan missionaries worked in the Western Pacific.

However, the impact of *Fa'a-Samoa* on the LMS Samoan mission fields, highlights two important characteristics of Samoan missionaries.

Firstly, it shows how Christianity and *Fa'a-Samoa* cultures had been fused together to form a Samoan Christian's worldview. From their *Kerisiano Fa'a-Samoa* perspective, Samoan missionaries effected changes to different aspects of indigenous cultures that they thought were necessary. Their paternalistic approach showed their eagerness to teach and to lead the indigenous population to an improved standard of living and to accomplish what was expected of them. In all the places they went, they created an environment much similar to their own context and it gave them a sense of authority and leadership. It made things easier for them as they imposed their own interpretation of Christianity on the people.

Secondly, it reflects the strong cultural make-up of Samoan missionaries. To be nurtured and raised up in *Fa'a-Samoa*, a culture so closely connected with their pride as Samoan people, Samoan missionaries viewed their *Fa'a-Samoa* as the most appropriate way to achieve their goal of advancing the process of evangelization, and improving living conditions.

In all, the impact of *Fa'a-Samoa* upon LMS Samoan missions to the Western Pacific was significant and this thesis has confirmed that. Samoan missionaries planted the seed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all the dark places they went to, using their *Kerisiano Fa'a-Samoa*.

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Dr. Feleterika Nokise	Malua	12 June, 2011.
Rev. Elder Oka Fau'olo	Apia	22 May, 2011.
Rev. Nukulaelae Iati	Apia	24 May, 20