VIEWING THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY (LMS) LAND ACQUISITIONS IN SAMOA FROM THE SAMOAN LAND TENURE PERSPECTIVES OF IGAGATŌ, MATŪ PALAPALA, AND PULE, 1830 - 1930

A Thesis Presented to the

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Master of Theology.

by

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ABSTRACT

An excerpt from the minutes of a meeting of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS)'s *Komiti o Feau Eseese (KFE* or General-Purpose Committee) in 2023 states the following (translated from Samoan):

> "Many issues have occurred for many of the churches and parishioners because of lands on which their church and minister's residence and halls occupy. Is it reasonable to try to make the lands 'free hold' and register them with the MNRE to avoid any disputes with the newer generations of families that originally offered these lands but have converted(?)"

The minute notes a rising concern for the CCCS due to issues and disputes brought forth by the customary owners of lands on which Church facilities occupy. The lands in which the facilities occupy are 'customary land,' therefore inalienable and subject to the authority of its traditional owners. Although the Church occupies these lands, the land remains under the jurisdiction of its traditional owners.

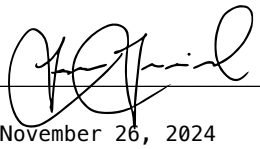
The mention of "many issues" points to the disruption of church activities by the traditional owners of these lands. In most villages in which the CCCS has a congregation, the CCCS facilities – churches, minister's house, hall, minister's plantation – occupy lands that were gifted to the Church for its use. However, the "many issues" describes the conduct of traditional owners in their disagreement with the parish's activities.

These events inspire this research, which is an attempt to identify a possible historical root of disputes regarding lands gifted to the Church's predecessor, the London Missionary Society, Samoa District Committee (LMS) (SDC). This thesis proposes that a potential root of these disputes is a cultural misunderstanding between the original donors of land and the LMS missionaries who received the land gifts. The research suggests that Samoans had two distinct methods of gifting land to the Church and others – *igagatō* and *matū palapala.* One of these

understandings meaning land was gifted for a temporal period, and the other understanding recognizes the permanent relinquishing of the landowner's rights to the land. This study analyzes lands gifted between 1830 and 1930, providing a historical account through case studies. In identifying the root cause(s) of the disputes against the Church's authority over land, the research provides a way of interpreting *pule,* or authority over Samoan land.

DECLARATION

I declare that this work has not been used without due acknowledgment of any material that has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in another institution. I also declare that the work has not used any material, heard or read, without proper acknowledgment of the source.

Signed: 

Date: November 26, 2024

DEDICATION

In loving memory of our Papa's and Mama's:
Taisouā Talopaia Semika Saafiga Aufotu
Auuapaau Faatoatoa Tauaivale Leituala Pele
Luaipou Seumanufagai Filo Tauaivale
Seumanufagai Autagavaia Fa'amasani Seumanufagai Filo
Lupematasila Elisara Sao Filioalii
Lua Nanai Vatau Elisara
Inailau Popese Palaamo Vaaulu
Momoti Iloga Aaitui Palaamo

Fa'afetai saili mālō; Fa'afetai tautua; Fa'afetai alolofa i Aiga, Nu'u, ae maise le Talalelei.

This work is also dedicated to:

Leutu Telona Liufau Taisouā Aufotu. We are here because of your prayers. This ministry and academic journey began with you at home on N Vineyard Blvd, Kauluwela: From "*A E I*" to "A B C"; "*Tasi Lua Tolu*" to "One Two Three"; "*O ai na faia oe*?" "*O ai lou Faaola*?"; to "*O la'u tatalo i le Atua, ia filifili mai se isi o outou la'u fanau e alu i Malua, ma fa'aaogaina e le Atua mo lana galuega*." You prayed this into existence. Your prayers sustained us on this journey. Thank you, Mama, for your *sasa, ote, fautua, faapelepele, tausiga, faatonu, tatalo*, *alofa.*

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List of Abbreviations

CCCS	Congregational Christian Church of Samoa
EFKS	Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa
KFE	Komiti o Feau Eseese (General-Purpose Committee)
LMS	London Missionary Society
MTC	Malua Theological College
SDC	Samoa District Committee
WMMS	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society

Chapter 1
A Samoan Worldview of Land & Gifting Land

1.1 Introduction

This chapter has a three-point purpose. Firstly, the aim is to present the issue that this undertaking addresses. This is done by describing the motive of the thesis and the problems experienced by the CCCS in relation to its possession of land. Secondly, the chapter provides the framework used in this research. The framework is first shaped by issuing a background on beliefs and attitudes held by Samoans regarding land, hence the title of this chapter. Then the chapter presents the hypothesis of the research, and the hermeneutical lens used in the approach. Lastly, the chapter identifies the method, 're-reading history,' as a means of filling the historical gap presented in the earlier sections.

1.2 Motivation

The London Missionary Society (LMS) was strategic in their approach to converting the Samoan islands to Christianity. A part of this strategy was building rapport and converting paramount chiefs, like Malietoa Vaiinupo and Seumanutafa of Apia.[1] At the outset of the LMS's mission, John Williams and those missionaries that followed, observed that the largest political institution "subject to centralized authority" was the village, or *nu'u.* Therefore, the success of conversion in Samoa in its earliest stages was vested in fostering partnership with such political entity.

Although partnership with the LMS for some chiefs was influenced by their desire for the "prestige and wealth" of the LMS, the missionaries "saw the benefits of associating with local chiefs."[2] A part of the benefits reaped by the LMS in this partnership included land that was gifted to them for the purpose of erecting mission stations, schools, churches, or any other cause that the

[1] Latu Latai and Peone Fuimaono, "O Le Taimane e Vivi'i ai: A History of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa Apia Church," *Samoa Journal of Theology* 2 (2023): 2

[2] Latai and Fuimaono, "O Le Taimane e Vivi'i ai," 2.

LMS deemed necessary. These bodies of land were often granted to the missionaries by leading *matai,* and usually only done with the consent of their entire *āiga.*

An example of such land is Paepaelauniu, a land "situated at the centre of the village of Fa'ala, Palauli" on the island of Savaii.[3] Today, its location borders the main road. Its central location makes it easy to access not only for the people of Fa'ala who live around it, but for those commuting and visiting from other parts of Savaii. Paepaelauniu would be considered 'prime real estate' in modern economic terms.

According to Samoan customs, Paepaelauniu is the *tulaga maota* (traditional residential site) or *malaefono* (meeting grounds) for the title "I'aulualo" of Palauli.[4] Palauli's *fa'alupega* regards the I'aulualo title as significant, serving as one of the main pillars of the village.[5] Otherwise referred to as the "*alo o Lilomaiava,"* or "son of Lilomaiva,"[6] the I'aulualo title is categorized as an *ali'i* of the village, serving not only as a leader in his family, but holding an important ceremonial role in the governance of the Fa'ala village and Palauli district.

On I'aulualo's Paepaelauniu*,* the first LMS Church in Fa'ala was built before the year 1888. The second church built "on the site of the first church," was erected in 1954. In 1984, the parishioners of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS) at Fa'ala took down the second church and decided to build another one.[7] Laga'aia Pelesi and members of the Laga'aia family had hosted the CCCS minister's residence on their land known as Fatufa'asaga for an immemorial time, and willingly gifted a parcel of land neighboring the minister's residency in

[3] Supreme Court of Samoa, "Board of Trustees of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa v Pouvi [2003] WSSC 4 (14 Feburary 2003," *Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute. http://www.paclii.org/cgi-bin/sinodisp/ws/cases/WSSC/2003/4.html?stem=&synonyms=&query=congregational%20christian*

[4] Supreme Court of Samoa, "CCCS v Pouvi." ; Makalau "Mk." Le Mamea, *O Le Tusi Faalupega o Samoa: Savaii, Upolu, Manono, ma Apolima,* ed. Te'o Tuvale, T.E. Faletoese, Kirisome (Malua: Fale lomitusi o le L.M.S., 1930), 41

[5] Malama Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa: Traditional Authority and Colonial Administration in the History of Western Samoa," (Ph.D diss., Macquarie University, 1986), 20; Meleisea defines *fa'alupega* as "a set of ceremonial greetings which are recited when the *fono* (council) meets. It serves as a constitution and encapsulates, in a few phrases, the origin and rank of each constituent title of the *nu'u* (village) and the order of precedence and ranking in the *fono.* There are *fa'alupega* for individual titles, for groups of titles (as in the case of orator groups), for the *nu'u* or local polity, for districts and for the nation."

[6] According to oral tradition, Lilomaiava is the progenitor of the Sa Lilomaiava family, of which occupied the Palauli and Safotu villages respectively.

[7] Hereafter, the CCCS will also be referred to as the Church.

1984 for erecting this new church building upon the Fa'ala parishes' decision to relocate.[8] This decision to build a new church building on another piece of land, consequently vacating the Paepaelauniu premises, would stir up tension between the I'aulualo family and the CCCS.

In 1988, members of the Church would arrive in Fa'ala to survey Paepaelauniu*,* the parcel previously vacated by the CCCS Fa'ala parish and were instantly greeted with the threat of gun blasts by the I'aulualo title holder of that time. This encounter would expose somewhat of an ongoing tension relating to the rightful ownership of land.

The removal of the church building and the decision of the Fa'ala parish to build their new church at Fatufa'asaga led the descendants of the I'aulualo title to assume that Paepaelauniu was no longer useful to the church. The assumption here was that the land, formerly used by the church, was now to return under the authority of the I'aulualo family. However, this assumption would lead to disagreements and eventually open the involvement of the Samoan judicial system in deciding who the rightful owner, or the *pule,* of the land is.

Between 2002 and 2003, the CCCS sought a court order to evict a family from Paepaelauniu.[9] The defendants, family members of the I'aulualo title, had occupied some of the area of Paepaelauniu*,* which the plaintiffs - the Church - claimed to be freehold land that belonged to them.[10] The defendants, under the impression that the section of Paepaelauniu formerly occupied by the church building is customary land - the "*maota* (traditional residential site)" of the title I'aulualo" - argued that the parcel belonged to their legal authority.[11]

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[8] Lualua Manila interview by Fraser Tauaivale, September 10, 2024. Lualua Manila is currently a fourth-year student at Malua Theological College. He is also a native of Fa'ala Palauli, and the grandson of Laga'aia Pelesi.

[9] Supreme Court of Samoa, "CCCS v Pouvi."

[10] "The (Samoan) Constitution recognizes and defines three types of land tenure: freehold, public and customary. Of the total land area in Samoa, about 81 per cent was estimated in 2002 to be customary land, 4 per cent freehold land and 15 per cent public land…Freehold land provides extensive rights to the titleholder, including disposition by sale, gift, mortgage, lease or will. The only restriction on such disposition is that the transfer must be registered in the Lands Registry and sale to a non-citizen requires the consent of the head of state. Public land is held by the state. Land below the high water mark is public land, thus avoiding the types of dispute that have arisen in other Pacific Island countries on the ownership of reefs. Customary land is held in accordance with Samoan custom and usage and with the law relating to Samoa custom and usage. Consequently, it is not owned individually. Authority over the land is vested in the holder of the matai title to which it is attached or, in the case of uncultivated land, in the chiefs and orators (faipule) of the village." Jennifer Corrin, "Resolving land disputes in Samoa," in *Making Land Work Volume Two: Case Studies on Customary Land and Development in the Pacific,* ed. Commonwealth of Australia (Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development, 2008), 203-204.

[11] Supreme Court of Samoa, "CCCS v Pouvi."

In the court case, the Church provided written evidence supporting their claim to legal ownership and authority over Paepaelauniu. The oldest piece of evidence being a deed of gift, signed by a *Faifeau Samoa* by the name of Seu, gifting the land to W.E. Clarke on behalf of the London Missionary Society in 1888:

> This Debenture mad this 1st day of June 1888 between Seu Samoan Pastor of the LMS the donor and W.E. Clarke of the second part. First part has agreed to freely give to him the piece of land. Donor does hereby grant and transfer to the Donee his successors and assigns all that land known as Paepaelauniu and situate at Fa'ala on which the LMS church now stands…for the sole use of the said Donee so long a time as the said piece of land shall be required by the Donee or his successors being the representatives or trustees of the LMS.[12]

According to the judge presiding over the matter, the Church provided substantial evidence to back their claim. Aside from the deed of gift, they also presented evidence of registration of this land during the changes in Samoa's colonial experience – first following the orders of the German government regarding land registrations from 1900 to 1915; and then ensuring that the land remained registered within their authority during the rule of the New Zealand administration in Samoa. Documentations proving their ownership would be filed as necessary even into Samoa's independence in 1962. On the contrary, the evidence provided by defendants included "oral testimony" and a court document concerning authority over the "I'aulualo" title from 1917, which the judge felt was questionable.

The I'aulualo family had jointly occupied Paepaelauniu with the LMS Church building, with evidence of this joint occupation going far back as 1917. According to the I'aulualo family members, at least five consecutive I'aulualo title holders were buried on this land. As the court adjourned, the judge decided in the favor of the Church. The evidence provided by the defendants were too questionable in comparison to the documents provided by the Church.

From this court case, a minute claim by the defendants seems to provide a hint of possibility that the question of ownership had arisen due to a misunderstanding between the LMS and Samoans regarding land tenure. One of the defendants had noted that "Seu had no right to gift the

[12] Supreme Court of Samoa, "CCCS v Pouvi."

land in 1888 to the LMS."[13] Although this statement was dismissed by the judge as being "oral testimony given more than a hundred years after the gift was made,"[14] it is something to consider, especially the indigenous process in which Samoan land is alienated. The presence of only Seu as the person offering the land to the mission is questionable when considering the indigenous Samoan understanding of land, and their relationship to the land. Two points brought forth in the court case against the CCCS by the I'aulualo family in 2001 challenging the authority of Seu to relinquish their customary land stated:

> *…o) O Seu o le na ia ave faameaalofa i Alii Misionare le mea e tu ai le Falesa o le LMS i Fa'ala Palauli. O le suli o Salaa i Sapapalii ae le o se tagata o le aiga o Iaulualo i Paepaelauniu…*
> *…f) O le uluai sueina o le pule o le fanua lenei o Paepaelauniu talu ona faavaeina mai o le ALC.495 20/8/1917 ma o lona uluai fuataga foi lea ona ua nofo Seu o le Suli o Salaa ma foai i le Alii Misionare LMS.* [15]
>
> Translation:
> …o) Seu gifted to the Missionary the plot where the LMS church building stands in Fa'ala Palauli. He is a descendant of Salaa in Sapapalii, but not a member of the Iaulualo family of Paepaelauniu…
> …f) This is the first investigation of the authority of the Paepaelauniu land since the establishment of ALC.495 20/8/1917 and this is the first land survey since Seu the descendant of Salaa offered it to the LMS.[16]

Within the Samoan context, authority of land is vested in the *matai* (chief) and *āiga* (family) as further discussed in the following sections of this chapter. Yet, according to the Iaualualo family, a non-*suli* – that is, a non-heir – is the sole signee that gifted the land to the

[13] Supreme Court of Samoa, "CCCS v Pouvi."

[14] Supreme Court of Samoa, "CCCS v Pouvi."

[15] "Faamasinoga o Fanua ma Suafa: E uiga i le Pule tonu o le fanua o Paepaelauniu i Faala Palauli," (Tuasivi: Ministry of Justices and Courts Administrations, 2001).

[16] English translation provided by author.

Mission. Not a single *matai* title is present in the original deed between Seu and the Clarke. It brings to light that perhaps the I'aulualo representatives of 1888 were unaware of the dealings between Seu and Clarke or had an oral agreement already in place between their family and the Mission. Whatever the case may be, it is buried underneath the paperwork that favored the CCCS's ultimate ownership of the land. But the attempt to reclaim the land upon the CCCS' vacancy signifies that the I'aulualo family had an interpretation of the oral agreement between their ancestors and the LMS in mind.

The reoccupation of Paepaelauniu by members of the I'aulualo family (upon the removal of the Church building from these grounds) aligns with the Samoan understanding of *matū palapala,* an exception to land alienation that will be discussed later in this chapter. Therefore, in the scope of Samoan customs, the re-claiming of land by I'aulualo aligns with what was once a common practice. However, the idea of land as private property - introduced through Samoa's dealings with the various European characters in the 1800s and eventually, the Berlin Treaty of 1889 followed by the colonial subjection of Samoa to German and New Zealand authorities respectively - would be enforced by the value of documented proof of ownership. This privatization of land and the indigenous understanding of Samoans gifting land (and the terms and conditions attached to both practices) would clash as evident in the Paepaelauniu case. Today, issues like the one of Paepaelauniu – disagreements concerning who has rightful ownership and authority (or *pule)* over land - are very much happening in the Church today; although some issues have been settled or are being settled without the Samoan judicial system.

From this case, the inspiration for this research arises. Although the CCCS provided substantial documented evidence supporting their legal ownership of this parcel of Paepaelauniu, questions regarding why the I'aulualo family would even consider challenging this authority come to mind. With the CCCS able to provide documentation, why would the I'aulualo family even resist in the first place? And if the land was gifted to the LMS for their use, why would the I'aulualo family expect the land to revert to their authority?

1.3 Thesis Problem

The defendant's argument that Seu did not have the authority to transfer ownership of the land hints to a key motivation in the I'aulualo family's resistance to the CCCS's claims and evidence; that is, the indigenous understanding and belief in not only lands inalienability, but also the understanding that ultimate authority over land is vested in community, not an individual. This notion hints to a concept of land gifting much more complex than the transfer of ownership noted in the 1888 document. Considering the context of 1888, literature exists to ascertain that the concept of permanent alienation of land was still unfathomable to the Samoan mind of that time. Furthermore, Samoans view the *matai* as the representative of *āiga* affairs, and therefore a I'aulualo title holder would've been the logical authority to sign the rights of Paepaelauniu over to the LMS. But in the 1888 document, this is not the case.

Another interesting fact from this case is that the offer of Paepaelauniu to be used by the LMS for the church building predates the 1888 document. Therefore, it appears that prior to written documentation, there must've been an oral exchange between representatives of the I'aulualo family and the LMS regarding the gifting of Paepaelauniu. The approval of granting Paepaelauniu to the LMS can be assumed to have been made by the I'aulualo title holder of the time, under the consensus of his *āiga.* However, there is no evidence explicitly indicating whether the I'aulualo family agreed to a permanent alienation of Paepaelauniu or not.

Paepaelauniu is only one of many lands under the CCCS's catalogue of free-hold land, and one example of lands 'gifted' to the Church. Fortunately for the LMS, since 1830, they were granted many acres of lands by their converts and followers throughout the Samoan islands for the sake of their mission.[17] However, as the CCCS have attempted to resurvey their free-hold

[17] According to the most recent report available at the CCCS Lands & Buildings Office, the CCCS owns at least 1,560 acres (approximately 631.5 hectacres) of free-hold land registered under Samoa's Land Titles Registration Act (LTRA) that is currently used for school facilities (Malua Theological College, Leulumoega Fou College, Leulumoega School of Fine Arts, Maluafou College); commercial properties (including the John Williams Building at Tamaligi where the CCCS headquarters is based and the *Maota o Tupulaga* hall which the CCCS rents for revenue); and plantations (under the supervision of the CCCS Development Committee, including the Malua plantation where commercial coconuts are supplied and the Church's cattle are raised); and lands leased to Church members and the general public (including a 80 acre land in Vaea divied into 210 plots of 176 ¼ acres & 34 ½ acres). Within this at-least 631.5 hectacres of land are a mixture of lands purchased by the LMS Samoa/CCCS from private owners and the government, as well as land gifted to the Church by parishioners. Outside of these lands, the CCCS is also the official registered owner (under the LTRA) of plots of lands in 56 villages throughout Samoa – plots on which a church building, minister's residence, church hall, and other local parish properties such as schools – stand on today, or formerly stood on and currently vacated, including the Paepaelauniu plot previously mentioned. These bodies of land also include a mixture of land purchased by the Church and lands gifted to the

catalogue, the Church has experienced some pushback from *āiga* and *nu'u* members who, like the I'aulualo of Paepaelauniu, claim that these lands were never meant to be alienated to the Church in the first place. In recent decades, the CCCS – the Samoan successor to the London Missionary Society (LMS) Samoa – has experienced similar legal challenges and disputes from families claiming that their lands were unrightly occupied by the LMS. In some instances, the CCCS requested court orders to evict individuals and families from occupying lands that the LMS had documented authority over. The tension regarding rightful ownership and authority over the CCCS's catalogue of 'freehold land' – usually between the CCCS and opposition who claim the parcels of land as being 'customary land' according to Samoan law– align with a pattern of claims that had become a trend in Samoa's legal system between Samoan families and the Samoan government.

It is these historical gaps – gifting of land to the LMS and the terms and conditions of these gifts as understood by the donors and the missionaries – that this thesis intends to explore. In this exploration, this thesis attempts to identify a potential historical root of the recent land disputes between the LMS and *āiga* and *nu'u* as a cultural misunderstanding between Samoans and the LMS regarding the terms and conditions of the lands gifted to the LMS by the Samoans. Special emphasis is placed on lands gifted as *matū palapala* as being the main gifts misunderstood by the missionaries.

1.4 Thesis Scope

A portion of the free-hold land owned by the CCCS today, along with a large amount of the lands occupied by a CCCS church building and minister's house in villages across Samoa, were gifted and dedicated to the CCCS and its predecessor by local *matai* on behalf of respective *āiga* and/or *nu'u.* The terms and conditions of these gifted lands –the designated purpose for the land, the time frame allotted for usage, whether the gift entails permanent alienation to the mission/Church – differ in each case. This thesis analyses some of these cases with the intent to

Church by *matai* and *āiga.* This listing remains confidential and is therefore not published in this thesis for reference. It is stored at the Lands & Buildings Office at the CCCS headquarters at Tamaligi. "Fanua Faaaogaina i Aoga; Fanua o lo o Faaaogaina i Pisinisi (Commercial Properties); Fanua o lo o Faaaoga i Atina'e; O Fanua Lisiina; Fanua o loo Avanoa; Fanua o Aulotu Ua Uma Ona Resitalaina: The Board of Trustees," 11 September 2024 (CCCS Lands & Buildings Office).

highlight the perceived understanding of both the donors and the LMS regarding their authority over these lands.

The CCCS's catalogue of free-hold land include properties purchased by the LMS from the German and New Zealand governments (during their respective periods of control over Samoa), acquisitions by the CCCS from the independent Samoan government, and properties bought by the Church from private owners. However, the scope of this thesis centers on the properties that can be categorized as 'gifts' to the Church – that is, land that both the LMS and CCCS did not receive in exchange for goods or money, or land that was "freely given" by Samoans to the Church. The logic behind this focus is that the challenges to land ownership experienced by the Church from *āiga* and *nu'u* are often associated with lands that were 'gifted' to the Church (as in the case of Paepaelauniu).

The period examined by this thesis is the first century of the LMS in Samoa, 1830 – 1930. Situated within the time frame are significant political developments regarding land laws in Samoa, including the Berlin Treaty of 1889 and the establishment of the Lands and Titles Commission[18] in Samoa (by Germany) in 1903. These developments reshaped the Samoan framework of land and land ownership, as European perception of land as 'private property' and 'trade commodity' began to seep into the Samoan land framework – a customary understanding that all Samoan land is inalienable.

The Berlin Treaty of 1889, agreed upon by representatives of Germany, England, and the United States of America, noted that "all land acquired earlier than 1879 was held to have been validly acquired "but without prejudice to rights of third parties – if purchased from the Samoans in good faith, for a valuable consideration in a regular and customary manner.""[19] About a decade after this agreement, these same colonial powers agreed to partition the Samoan islands, subjecting the western islands of Samoa to the authority of Germany. One of the earliest impacts of German rule in Samoa was the establishment of the Commission, dedicated to resolving disputes regarding Samoan land and *matai* titles.

These two events are important in the discussion of lands gifted to the LMS because they confirmed the European perception of land held by the White LMS Missionaries. Firstly, the Berlin

[18] Hereafter referred to as the Commission.

[19] Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 94.

Act "introduced Western land tenure and registration systems, and formal judicial structures to adjudicate land matters."[20] The lack of a central government in Samoa made it difficult for Europeans to make legitimate claims of ownership to Samoan land. Although the signing of land deeds had already been practiced by LMS and foreign individuals/entities alike in their interactions with Samoans and other Europeans, there was a lack of a central government to oversee and enforce these transactions. However, the Berlin Treaty was a step towards legitimizing legal documentation as genuine proof of land ownership.

The LMS had already been documenting their own land claims through the various European entities that served European interests in Samoa, but their signed documents were meaningless to the Samoans who remained under the impression that land could not be alienated from *āiga* and *nu'u.* Yet the proximity of the Paepaelauniu document of 1888 to the Berlin Treaty of 1889 shows that the LMS was perhaps already aware of, preparing for, and hopeful that a shift to an understanding and acceptance of the concept of private property was in the horizon.

Secondly, the legal registration of land as private property was on the verge of becoming legitimate. Although the political landscape of Samoa at this time saw attitudes of acceptance of and resistance against German and New Zealand imperial rule, the diverse entities of *nu'u* and *ītūmālō* were now in the shadow of colonial powers that could legislate laws and enforce them upon the people with the help of the lingering thought of their military might. For the LMS, this meant that there was a government that was now in position to legitimize and enforce their own claims to Samoan lands, although this does not mean an intentional and legitimate collaboration between State and Church. Both entities, at least from the perspective of the missionaries, were separate and independent of each other's influence.

Within the range of years selected for this thesis, potential historical root(s) of the current land disputes experienced by the CCCS can be found. The move of the LMS to register or acquire documented proof of their ownership of lands gifted to them and/or 'purchased' land shows that for the LMS, there was only one interpretation of these gifts: they are permanent mission property. However, as depicted in the gun incident at Paepaelauniu in 1988, (a century after the signing of the oldest evidence of CCCS ownership of that property), alternate understandings of these gifts continue to challenge this interpretation.

[20] Fanaafi Aiono Le Tagaloa, "Sua le Lea – Toto le Ata: The Land and Titles Court of Samoa 1903 – 2008," (Ph.D diss., University of Otago, 2009), 52-53.

This alternative understanding highlights two ways of interpreting lands gifted to the LMS. Firstly, gifted lands were granted to the LMS for permanent possession. These lands are referred to in this thesis as *igagatō.* Then there is land, as the I'aulualo family claimed to be the case of Paepaelauniu*,* that were gifted for the temporary use of the LMS. So long as this land was useful to the LMS, it would remain in their possession. However, the possession and authority over such land was understood to revert to the original owners and occupants once it was no longer of use to the mission. This category of gifted land will be referred to as *matū palapala* in this thesis.

The CCCS hold clear, documented evidence of their ownership of the lands in their free-hold catalogue. Furthermore, regarding the parcels of land on which local CCCS parishes have their church building and minister's house, the CCCS seldom experiences challenges to their authority over these properties. However, challenges to the Church's ownership of these properties arise regardless of the evidence they possess and the oral support of the local congregations. And in most of these cases, the core of the challenges posed by *āiga* and *nu'u* against the CCCS's authority and ownership of land is about the original terms and conditions of the gift – whether it was an *igagatō* or *matū palapala.*

In the coming chapters, lands gifted to the LMS will be identified within the context of these two indigenous practices. The thesis is mainly concerned with lands granted for the purpose of chapels/church buildings and mission dwelling, although some examples of land granted to the LMS for purposes outside of the two mentioned, including the Malua Seminary, are highlighted within the framework presented. Investigation of primary sources from the missionaries will uncover whether the missionaries understood these cultural concepts, and whether they were justified in their move to privatize these gifts as property of the LMS. This thesis will also identify clear examples in which the views of Samoans and the LMS clearly contradicted each other. Prior to such an endeavour, it is foremost necessary to provide an understanding of the relationship of Samoans and land during the pre and early mission years.

1.5 A Samoan Worldview of Land

Before 1889, legitimate alienation of land in Samoa, that is the transfer of land ownership "from one set of owners to another," was only possible as an outcome of war.[21] The missionaries

[21] Malama Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 92.

arrived in 1830 and the status quo indicated that all land in Samoa were under the authority of *itūmālō, nu'u, and āiga.* The average Samoan individual identified themselves in relation to their *āiga* (families), *nu'u* (village), and in some instances, *itūmālō* (district).[22] These entities that held authority of land, specifically the *āiga,* exercised autonomy in their selection of a *matai* that served as a leader for their respective family, and their family's voice in *nu'u* and *itūmālō* affairs.

1.5.1 *Āiga* & Land

The most basic recognized unit of Samoan social structure is the *āiga,* often translated as the 'family.' However, *āiga* extends beyond the European understanding of immediate family-made up of a father, mother, and children (that are siblings). As Meleisea noted, "An *āiga* can be any family group from a married couple to a large clan comprising all the descendants of a common ancestor either male or female."[23] Most would refer to an *āiga* as a "family and a household community in blood, close or distant relations."[24]

The *āiga* can be described as a "genealogically inclusive corporate group," that is, membership to an *āiga* is traced by genealogical record.[25] The common ground for *āiga* members is their genealogical link to an *āiga's* founder, usually the original bearer of the *matai* title in which the *āiga* is named after. Active engagement in this social structure is evident through the following forms, as Sharon Tiffany notes:

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[22] As a collective of *āiga* form a *nu'u,* so a collective of *nu'u* may establish an *itūmālō.* The establishment of *itūmālō* is forged by a "common allegiance and kinship ties to kingly titles of Samoa." The *itūmālō,* governed by the *fono itūmālō,* a board of leadership made up of a paramount chief and *matai* representing 'important villages in the district,' were made up of *nu'u* "grouped together in adjacent locations within the specific geographical boundaries." For further reading, see Elia Ta'ase, "The Congregational Christian Church in Samoa: The Origin and Development of an Indigenous Church, 1830 – 1961," (Ph.D. Thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1995), 28-29.

[23] Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 27

[24] Howard Leiataua, "Se'i Tatou 'Āleaga: Let's Discuss the Involvement of the LMS Mission in Sāmoa's Civil Wars of 1880 – 1900 A Historical Analysis," (MTh thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2013), 36

[25] Sharon Tiffany, "The Cognatic Descent Groups of Contemporary Samoa," *Man,* no. 3 (1975): 431

"…(1) economic support of *āiga* exchanges and ceremonial redistributions, (2) residence on the estate of the *āiga,* (3) cultivation of land vested in the membership of the *āiga,* and (4) political support."[26]

Genealogical linkage to a *matai* title constitutes membership to *āiga;* however, it is in participating in one or a combination of the above that grants an individual a say in *āiga* affairs. Considering the various genealogical ties of an individual, it is safe to assume that one person can be actively engaged in participation in various *āiga* affairs. Firstly, through an individual's parents, a person can be linked to various *āiga* as is. Furthermore, although an individual's *āiga* may be in separate *nu'u*, engagement and participation in all their respective *āiga* affairs is possible, as through their genealogy, they are considered *suli* or legitimate heirs to whatever *āiga* they descend from.

The *āiga* serves as the space in which cultural values and concepts are taught to children. This is the space in which knowledge of customs and traditions are imparted on to individuals. Their understanding and worldviews are first and foremost shaped by the beliefs and values of *āiga.* It is also through *āiga* that individuals have access to land. On these lands, *āiga* members hone agricultural and economic skills from their adolescence. All the learning is done under the supervision and oversight of the family *matai* whose duty is to ensure that resource management is embedded in the education of the youth whose communal task is to meet the needs of their *āiga.*

Every family is led by a *matai* who is chosen after much deliberation between *āiga* members. This *matai* is the vocal and visible leader of the *āiga and* represents the *āiga* in *nu'u* affairs. He is responsible for the welfare of the group through efficient administrations of the family lands and resources. The *matai* "may be considered as privilege class but not without special obligations and demands."[27]

A part of the responsibilities of the *matai* was the allocation of land to members of their *āiga* for housing and farming; however, this distribution is exercised considering the authority of the *āiga* who also reserve the right to request specific land or advise the *matai* on his management

[26] Tiffany, "The Cognatic Descent Groups of Contemporary Samoa," 432

[27] Clarke Stowers, "Historical Mamanu: A Relational Approach Towards the History of Education in Samoa Between 1830 and 1900," (MTh Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2019), 38; See also Lowell Holmes, *A Quest For The Real Samoan: The Mead/Freeman Controversy & Beyond* (Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1987), 40.

of land.[28] In other words, the land belongs to the *āiga,* and the *matai* is to be understood as a 'custodian' or 'trustee.'[29] Malama Meleisea, a renowned Samoan historian, noted that the *matai* was "a custodian of the *āiga* estate and allocated rights to use sections of land for individual cultivation among members of the *āiga.*"[30] Staying true to the spirit of collectivism, all land in Samoa "was held communally."[31] Further elaborating on land ownership, Elia Ta'ase – a Samoan Church Historian wrote:

> Land is communally owned in Samoa. The total land mass has been divided according to districts. District land is then sub-divided according to the component villages. Village land is further divided according to the constituent families.[32]

Although the *matai* holds decision making power in the context of *nu'u,* such power or *pule* is not isolated from the authority of *āiga.* As a matter of fact, the *matai* is both spokesperson and custodian of *āiga,* and therefore his actions must always consider the welfare and opinion of the *āiga* members. In relation to land, this ensures that the *matai* cannot make exclusive claims of ownership to *āiga* land, and therefore cannot make decisions about land that would undermine or neglect the right and authority that *āiga* members have to this land as well. So, the *matai* can approve the allocation of land to individuals of the *āiga* and approve the purpose for land being used but cannot release the land to members outside of the *āiga* on his own free will.

The modern land surveying methods were only introduced to Samoa by the missionaries and colonial administrations; however, this did not mean Samoans lacked a means of recording land data. Division of these lands were noted "when land had been cultivated or settled, or when natural features such as rivers, valleys, or hills were agreed upon as boundary markers."[33] Other boundary markers that separated land belonging to one *āiga* from the next were borders created

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[28] Sarasopa Enari Jr., "A Christian Reflection on the Customary Land Tenure System and Modern Development in Samoa," (BD thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1982), 6.

[29] Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 34; See also Enari Jr., "A Christian Reflection on the Customary Land Tenure System," 20.

[30] Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 28

[31] Sylvia Masterman, *The Origins of International Rivalry in Samoa 1845 – 1884* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1934), 11

[32] Ta'ase, "The Congregational Christian Church in Samoa," 39

[33] Meleisea, "The Making of Moddern Samoa," 34.

from the digging of ditches, the piling of stone fences, or the linear planting of trees.[34] These boundaries noting *āiga* land could be in some cases, "large contiguous holdings," or also as "scattered parcels" throughout the *nu'u*.[35]

The allocation of *āiga* land to *āiga* members were to fulfil two purposes: firstly, residential area or *fale* (houses) for the members; and secondly, land for *āiga* member's planting and farming needs. Despite the land's allocation to *āiga* members, Samoans did not view these allocated pieces as now belonging to the individual member it was granted to. Instead, the land remained as property of the *āiga* which meant that the individual member that the land had been allocated to is to use the land under the guidelines agreed upon by the *āiga.*

Āiga settlements on land were relationally strategic. As Stowers notes, "the *fale* is not standing in a vacuum. It considers the contribution of nature through the piece of land '*tulagamaota*' (*tulaga* means position and *maota* is a respectful word given to the house of the extended family).[36] The *tulagamaota* can be thought of as the arena in which the *āiga* conducts its meetings and ceremonial affairs. Surrounding an *āiga's tulagamaota* are the *fale* of *āiga* members. The position of these *fale's* is usually allocated by the *matai* after much agreement between the *āiga.* Sailiemanu Lilomaiava-Doktor noted three types of *fale* can be identified within *āiga* grounds: "*faletalimalo* (guest/meeting house) and *faletofa* (sleeping house) and *faleo'o* (smaller hut)."[37] One may also add *tūnoa* (kitchen) to this list.

Āiga members shared a common pattern of land usage, having "breadfruit and banana trees…in the immediate vicinity of the *fales,* while closely spaced coconut palms were located immediately behind the village proper."[38] The proximity of breadfruit and banana to the homes ensured members of *āiga* had ease of access to food. Furthermore, the convenience of having breadfruit and banana on *āiga* perimeters was in its low maintenance. The breadfruit tree was guaranteed to bear breadfruit various times throughout the year, yielding enough food to last a

[34] Enari Jr., "A Christian Reflection on the Customary Land Tenure System," 18.

[35] Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 34.

[36] Stowers, "Historical Mamanu," 12.

[37] Sailiemanu Lilomaiava-Doktor, "Fa'a Samoa and Population Movement From the Inside Out: The Case of Salelologa, Savai'i," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Hawaii, 2004), 118.

[38] Nevin Bryant, "Change in the Agricultural Land Use in West Upolu Western Samoa," (MA Thesis, University of Hawaii, 1967), 29.

family week and maybe months. The banana would also bear enough to cater the *āiga* members for days on in once the banana was mature. These trees provided maximum food on minimal space.

Nuclear families took on the responsibility of serving the *matai,* a responsibility that involved the preparation of food. However, a *matai,* certain to be the recipient of abundance, usually redistributed his food wealth to the elder members of the *āiga.* Such distribution and redistribution ensured that all *āiga* members were beneficiaries of the food grown on their land.

The physical layout of homes on *āiga* land reflected the communal closeness of *āiga* members. Describing the spatial setup of *āiga,* Alesana Palaamo, lecturer at Malua Theological College (MTC), noted that "each nuclear family was therefore located within a broader web of family connections."[39] Further elaborating on this notion, Palaamo cites Rev. Teuteronome who described the contrast between a Samoan *āiga* and European family as follows:

> …there is a vast difference between a Samoan and a *palagi* family regarding the family unit. [A *palagi* family] includes only the couple and their children; they have a flat that houses their household and that's all they are concerned of. But here with the Samoan family, if the *matai* lives here, other households are located around him who serve and care for [the *matai]* and listen to the *matai.*[40]

Although Teuteronome's observation is a critique of familial values, his comment captures the essence of the physical landscape of most *āiga.* In relation to *āiga* agriculture, the use of land areas in proximity to a nuclear family's *fale* served the purpose of feeding the nuclear family, but also serving the *matai* – a responsibility shared by all nuclear families within *āiga*.

Indigenous traditions safeguarded the land, ensuring that *āiga* land permanently remains as such, by imposing a sort of 'check and balance' in the matai's authority over *āiga* matters and an individual's usage of land upon its allocation. This safeguard is the ensuring of the *āiga*'s ultimate authority over their lands. These safeguards reflect the understanding of land ownership being a 'communal concern' in contrast to an 'individual' matter.[41] The only prerequisite to having

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[39] Alesana Palaamo, "Pastoral Counselling in a Changing Samoa: Development, Christianity and Relationality," *Sites: A Journal of Social Anthropology and Cultural,* no.1 (2019): 101.

[40] Palaamo, "Pastoral Counselling in a Changing Samoa," 102.

[41] Enari Jr., "A Christian Reflection on the Customary Land Tenure System," 57.

a voice in the delegation of *āiga* land is direct membership to the *āiga.* So long as one proved their genealogical ties to an *āiga,* their direct descendancy to the *āiga,* they were considered in the allocation and usage of the lands and were eligible to be selected as *matai* for that *āiga*. This reliance on genealogical tradition ensured that *āiga* land could never be loss by an *āiga;* therefore, it would be accessible to the next generation of *āiga* members.

1.5.2 *Nu'u* & Land

Beyond the *āiga* land was land that belonged to the *nu'u.* This land consisted of "uncultivated, unoccupied and unclaimed land within its territorial boundaries."[42] The *nu'u*, as Meleisea notes, "was more than a settlement, it was a territory which was collectively owned and controlled by a number of bilateral, corporate descent groups termed *āiga."*[43] The respective *āiga* that collectively form a *nu'u* are often noted in the *nu'u fa'alupega.* The *fa'alupega* highlights the families that make up the *nu'u* and serves as a proclamation of the *matai* and *āiga* that oversee the *nu'u* affairs.

Nu'u is often translated as 'village', but 'polity' is arguably more appropriate. The collective of *āiga* that solidifies bond and forms a *nu'u* are technically in agreement over an oral constitution that governs their relations and affairs. The bond of a nu'u is forged through "pursuit of goals conducive to the common good of the community."[44]

The collective of *matai* representing the *āiga* that form a *nu'u* create the leadership body known as the *fono* (council). The *fono,* as the governing body of the *nu'u,* has an 'autocratic authority' over the *nu'u* affairs.[45] It is in the *fono* that laws are discussed, debated, and decided, all of which affect the lives of *āiga* and its members. The means of decision making and the status and ranks of *matai* and their roles vary from *nu'u* to *nu'u* as each *nu'u* has its own unique identity.[46]

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[42] Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 34.

[43] Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 26

[44] Ta'ase, "The Congregational Christian Church in Samoa," 26

[45] Leiataua, "Se'i Tatou 'Āleaga," 39

[46] Leiataua, "Se'i Tatou 'Āleaga," 38-39

General responsibilities of the *fono* and its role in *nu'u* affairs are summed up in the following statement by Elia Ta'ase:

> It alone sanctions the engagement in wars, the performance of the *ifoga* when events call for it, and orders participation in community projects like digging of wells, the building of churches, schools and the creation of stone walls along village borders. The council is also responsible for the partitioning of village lands and the formulation and enforcement of village rules and regulations…When decisions are made and the course of action determined, the instruction is given to the other status groups within the village, especially the *aumaga* and *aualuma* who will execute theme…While it respects the autonomy of each *āiga*, the *fono* can demand from each family respect and adherence to village regulations. Should an *āiga* disregard their responsibilities to the village, the council can uproot and exile its members.[47]

Although Ta'ase's reference to the building and creation of churches and schools present ideas incorporated post-1830, the rest of the statement remains true in discussing the *fono's* influence in *nu'u* affairs prior to the influence of European traders and missionaries.

The delegation of tasks to the *aumaga* and *aualuma* is also a key function of the *fono* in relation to the *nu'u.* Erich Schultz describes the *aumaga* as the collective of "all male persons of the village."[48] Contrarily, the *aualuma* or *aualuma o teine* is the incorporated group made up of "all unmarried females" of a *nu'u.*[49] The *aumaga* is responsible for carrying out physical labor on behalf of the *fono*; labor that is inclusive but not limited to the ones mentioned above by Ta'ase.[50] They are also responsible for the enforcement of rules/laws passed by the *fono*, somewhat like the modern-day law enforcement institutions. Although they are tasked with enforcing the laws at the

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[47] Ta'ase, "The Congregational Christian Church in Samoa," 25-27.

[48] Erich Schultz, "The Most Important Principles of Samoan Family Law, and the Laws of Inheritance," *Journal of Polynesian Society,* no. 2 (1911): 48.

Erich Schultz, a German ethnologist who was also appointed as a judge to German Samoa in 1899, later serving as governor of German Samoa from 1911 to 1914.

[49] Schultz, "The Most Important Principles of Samoan Family Law," 48.

[50] Ta'ase, "The Congregational Christian Church of Samoa," 27-28.

local *nu'u*, they also serve as protectors of the *nu'u* from danger presented by neighbouring *nu'u* and other potential threats.

The *aualuma, "*made up of sisters and daughters of the *fono* and the *aumaga,"* served a ceremonial role.[51] Their responsibilities included the making of fine mats, and other handicrafts and maternal traditions including but not limited to "making dyes and medicine, healing and massage, midwifery, and magical and supernatural arts…"[52] Another important task of the *aualuma* was the hygienic sanitation of the *nu'u* and *āiga fanua.* They ensured both *nu'u* and *āiga* facilities were clean and presentable and were also naturally responsible for hospitality when 'visiting parties' from other *āiga* and *nu'u* came by.[53]

Considering the function of *aumaga* and *aualuma* in relation to the *fono,* it makes sense why they are often referred to as the *malosi o le nu'u* (strength of the village). Although the *fono* is responsible for providing guidelines and directions on *nu'u* operations, the execution of their authority depends on the obedience of the *malosi o le nu'u.* The *tautua* (service) of the untitled men and unmarried women is critical in this context as it is usually through their *tautua* that both *āiga* and *nu'u* identify the future leaders of their respective organizations.

At the command of the *fono,* the *nu'u* always had a *maumaga* – crop plantation – "planted by the *aumaga* on newly clear land."[54] Much of the *maumaga* work that the *aumaga* committed to under the instruction of the *fono* were initiated and reserved for "ceremonial occasion (that) demanded a large amount of food."[55] The *fono,* often made up of *matai* who served in the *aumaga,* usually had expertise in planting and harvesting, and were aware of soil erosions. This is arguably why "shifting cultivation" was the preferred method practiced by *āiga* and *nu'u* in crop planting.[56] Furthermore, 'shifting cultivation' ensured that following the harvest, the land used would eventually be overtaken by 'scrub and bush.' This methodical process allowed the soil to heal and ensure its fertility for future crop planting. Such a practice and common understanding allowed for

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[51] Penelope Schoeffel, "Daughters of Sina: A Study of Gender, Status and Power in Western Samoa," (Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 1979),152.

[52] Schoeffel, "Daughters of Sina," 152.

[53] Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 29.

[54] Bryant, "Change in the Agricultural Land Use in West Upolu," 30.

[55] Bryant, "Change in the Agricultural Land Use in West Upolu," 28.

[56] J.H. Mercer and Peter Scott, "Changing Village Agriculture in Western Samoa," *The Geographical Journal,* no. 3 (1958): 347

different *āiga* to use the same *nu'u* inland grounds at different times, without quarrelling over what *āiga* had the right to authority over these lands.

The agricultural goods produced by the *aumaga* of *āiga* and *nu'u,* upon harvest, were usually distributed by *matai.* The *fono* would distribute the fruits and crops yielded from the *aumaga*'s labor to the respective *āiga*'s of the *nu'u.* The *fono* in their planning were also intentional about the timing for the *aumaga's maumaga* labor. Periods of depletion or food shortages, known as the days of *oge,* would require the *fono* to command the *aumaga* to plant in advance. The harvest would then be managed and distributed carefully by the *fono* to ensure a stability in food supply was reserved to carry the *nu'u* through these extreme circumstances.

The service of these men and women in the *āiga* and *nu'u* is also important as it is in these spaces that informal and formal education of 'ceremonial and political roles,'[57] learning inclusive of both genealogy and safeguard of *fanua* is facilitated. Much of land in the territorial *nu'u* were designated as *āiga* land. Yet beyond the borders of *āiga* land were land under the oversight of the *fono* and *nu'u.* A *fono* would claim authority over unoccupied land that extended beyond the residential and plantation borders of *āiga,* land that extended miles and miles inland.

1.5.3 Religious Practice & Land

The lack of "altars stained with human blood, no *maraes*, strewed with skulls and bones of its numerous victims," led John Williams to describe the Samoans as a "godless" people.[58] This first impression, on which he reneged upon his second visit to Samoa, was far from the truth. Although Samoa did not mirror Tahiti in its extravagant monuments dedicated to their various gods, Samoa indeed practiced a type of polytheism.

Perhaps the physical structure of the *fale*'s in a *nu'u* seemed like one another, misleading William's conclusion that Samoans were irreligious. Furthermore, unoccupied bushland may easily be dismissed as unoccupied and unsettled territory. A well-kept *malae* – that is, a field reserved for *fono* meetings – could have simply been a reflection of an *aumaga's* good landscaping

[57] Penelope Schoeffel, "Daughters of Sina," 152

[58] Faatulituli Setu, "The Ministry in the Making: A History of the Emergence of the Ministry of the Church in Samoa 1830-1900," (MTh Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1988), 1; See also Richard Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams 1830 and 1832* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1984), 265 ; John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South-Sea Islands* (London: John Snow, Paternoster Row, 1840), 42.

and maintenance work. However, William's European perception of what constitutes an outward reflection of religious blinded him from Samoan religiosity. Crawford explains:

> It is thought that most villages had a *fale aitu* or spirit house (known as *malumalu*) or some other shrine, such as a sacred grove. Here the god might be worshipped with offerings of food, (*taulaga*) and other observances…The malae in Samoa was the hallowed area of land reserved for important meetings.[59]

The first missionaries to Samoa may have not been able to distinguish the purpose of the various *fale* that they observed due to the similarity in design and structure of all the buildings. After all, the only difference between the *maota* of a *matai* and a *fale* of residence may have been the size, but the structures were all the same, "no walls or partitions and people can enter and exit from any side of the building."[60] Yet as the missionaries would discover in the praxis of Samoans, the *faletele* for an *āiga* was not only a place for dialogue, but also a "place of worship where the kava ceremony takes place and political and social matters are deliberated."[61]

The influence of the *matai* system was heavily intertwined with religious implications. Of the two types of *matai,* the *ali'i* title was passed down in *āiga* whose "genealogies were traced back to divine origins, and significant events in the history of their lineages were marked by commerce with the gods."[62] The *tulafale* families were generally "recognised priests (*taualāitu*) of the gods."[63] Beyond their leadership roles, *ali'i* and *tulafale* had a divine importance in their *āiga, nu'u*, and *ītūmālō.* The matai's sense of divine influence, coupled with the belief and backing of their *āiga*, ensured that *āiga* would agree on the allocation of land for *fale aitu* or *malumalu.* Their influence would also be reflected in the ceremonial roles they played in the kava ceremony, as well as in the imparting of familial folklore to their young people.

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[59] Ronald Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'asāmoa: Church and Society in Samoa, 1830 – 1880," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Otago, 1977), 55.

[60] Latu Latai, "From Open Fale to Mission House: Negotiating the Boundaries of Domesticity in Samoa," in *Divine Domesticities Christian Paradoxes in Asia and the Pacific,* ed. Hyaeweol Choi and Margaret Jolly (Canberra: ANU Press, 2013), 301.

[61] Clarke Stowers, "From Faleoo to the Christian Missionaries' Formal Education Approach," *Samoa Journal of Theology,* no.1 (2023): 13.

[62] Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'asāmoa," 54.

[63] Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'asāmoa," 56.

The immediate vicinity of the *tulaga maota* of a *matai* and *āiga* was also associated with divine, religious power. This notion is evident in a Samoan practice seen at the funeral of a *matai* that has survived the times of the missionaries and continues today. Taipisia Leilua, Samoan theologian, former lecturer at MTC, and the current General Secretary of the CCCS described this ritual:

> There is also a special ceremony during a funeral of a *matai* (titled man or woman), which is still practiced today. When the *matai* (chiefs and orators) of a village offer a sacrifice supposedly to the gods, as they approach the house where the deceased lies awaiting the final funeral service and then burial, they chant the words, "*Tulouna a le lagi, tulouna a le lagi, ma le lagi, ma le lagi, tulou*." They continue to chant these words as they encircle the house…These words do not refer to the heaven as a place above, separated from earth, but they refer to the places where the gods of the deceased are in his *aiga* (family), his *fanua* (land) and his *fale* (house).[64]

This example asserts that Samoans deemed their land and residency to be sacred as an abode for their gods. This assertion of the sacredness of land is also reflected in the practice of naming land. In *nu'u*, a *matai* and *āiga* own and live on land that have names. The land is personified as a living being, and in honor of such a belief, land – like people – have names. The *tulaga maota* have a name, usually relating to some history associated with the origin of the *matai* title. In some instances, these names reflect the *āiga* beliefs about the divine. Lands out in the forest under the authority of *nu'u* and unoccupied lands also have a designated name. Take for instance, the land on which the LMS established a school for girls in Tutuila in the year 1900, that was eventually named Atauloma:

> *…fai mai sa i ai le aitu sauā i aso anamua e igoa ia La'a, sa nofo i luga o le ma'a tele i le tolotolo lena. Fai mai sa le uia lenei auala e tagata anamua, a e afai e sau se malaga i le ala*

[64] Taipisia Leilua, "Heaven and Earth Inseparable: A Samoan Eco-Theological Perspective," *Samoa Journal of Theology,* no.1 (2023): 108. In a footnote to this paragraph, Leilua notes that "*Tulou* is the respectful word used for excusing yourself of walking in front of other people especially *matai*, church ministers and old people. But here it is used by the *matai* to excuse them for entering the heaven of the deceased which includes the whole living space of his/her gods, family and land."

i luga nei, ua fasiotia loa e le aitu sauā. O le mea lea sa ui ai tagata i lalo i le matafaga; o loo i ai i lalo o le futu lena le papa ua i ai tulaga e o ai i lalo…a ua sua le tai, ona nonofo lea I lalo o lena futu e tauloma ai le tai seia pe, sei loloma le tai. [65]

Translation:

… in ancient days, a tyrannous divine being named La'a lived on the boulder in that slope. People did not take this route in those days, but if they did journey this slope, they would be killed (by La'a). This is why people detoured to the beach; beneath the *futu* (tree) there is a boulder where people went down…if the tide is high, they would sit under the *futu* to (*tauloma*) await the low tide…[66]

The land was originally called *Tauloma;* but since the missionaries did not like the origins of the name due to the association with old Samoan beliefs, they renamed the grounds *Ataoroma,* meaning a "picture/reflection of Rome."

Closely related to the above practice is the practice of burials in Samoa. Various historical accounts note that Samoans buried their dead "close to houses," and in other cases, the dead were buried "under the stone platforms *(paepae)* that formed the floor and foundations of traditional houses."[67] Within the perimeters of a *fale tele, matai* holders from generations prior are generally laid to rest, and there the rest of their successors are bound to be when they die. The placement of the dead within *āiga* land not only show their value to and endearment from the living, but they lay as a reminder to the living to "safeguard rights to property."[68]

Another exercise of *matai* in their divine role was the "rendering sacred" the "incarnation" of their *āiga* and/or *nu'u* gods.[69] The "rendering sacred" or deeming an area or object as *sā,* was a practice that prohibited people from touching, taking, using, and/or destroying what the *matai* and

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[65] Kenape Faletoese, *O Le Tala Faasolopito O Le Ekalesia Samoa [L.M.S.], A History of the Samoan Church [L.M.S.]* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1959), 44.

[66] English translation provided by author. The suffix *loma* in *tauloma* means something that is bound to happen, or pending.

[67] Malama Meleisea and Penelope Schoeffel, "The Work of the Dead in Samoa: Rank, Status and Property," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, no.2 (2016): 149-150.

[68] Meleisea and Schoeffel, "The Work of the Dead in Samoa," 168.

[69] M.D. Olson, "Re-Constructing Landscapes: The Social Forest, Nature, and Spirit-World in Samoa," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, no.1 (1997): 19.

āiga deemed to be their deity – whether it be an animal, a fish, an insect, or even a tree. In the case of untouched groves such as that described by Crawford, or even conserved bushland, the European assumption would be that these lands were simply uncultivated due to negligence or lack of usefulness. But for some Samoan *āiga* and *nu'u*, this reflected their honoring of the divine. *Matai* would prohibit the community from felling trees or even stepping afoot in the bush for fear of angering the deity. Disobedience to the *sā* was believed to "invite sickness or death."[70] Instances as these would influence a *matai* and *āiga's* intentional decision to leave acres of land untouched and uncultivated, so that the deities can roam freely. This reverence and fear of the sacredness of forest for those *āiga* and *nu'u* who formerly worshipped deities of the forest carried well on into the first fifty years since the arrival of the Gospel in Samoa. M.D. Olson cites an observation from Methodist missionary as told to LMS missionary George Turner in Samoa in the early 1880's:

> One of the sacred forests contained most valuable timber, called '*ifilele*.' No Samoan durst touch it, even after all the inhabitants had become nominally Christian….one of the missionaries..[making] known his intention to cut down one of the sacred trees…carried his purpose into execution….when they saw no harm come to him they…followed his example…..The taboo now being removed, the whole forest became common.[71]

Although by the 1880's, some missionaries such as George Turner report that the Samoan islands had already converted to Christianity, remnants of their former religious beliefs appeared hard to shake as evident in the hesitancy of the Samoans to cut the timber. Such attitude is rooted in the reverence that Samoans had for the forest and bush, especially considering the *sā* formerly placed on these bodies of land by their ancestors. As noted in the previous sections, borders and boundaries of *āiga* and *nu'u* land were clear prior to the arrival of the LMS. And in the cases of some forest and groves, the lack of cultivation can be explained by the allocation of those lands by *āiga* and *nu'u* to the deities of Samoa.

The misconception that Samoa was irreligious prior to the LMS's arrival can be refuted by the allocation of Samoan land by *āiga* and *nu'u* for religious practices. *Matai* or the *fono* would

[70] Olson, "Re-Constructing Landscapes," 18.

[71] Olson, "Re-Constructing Landscapes," 22.

allocate land for *fale aitu* or *malumalu,* and in other instances, they would intentionally designate land areas as sacred – a home for the *aitu* – therefore leaving such land untouched. For Europeans of the 19th century, extravagant Church buildings and altars was an outward expression of religion. However, for the Samoans of the time, allowing nature to flourish in the form of bushland was a subtle expression of their sacred *faiā* with the divine.

1.5.4 *Faiā*: The Relationship between Samoan and Land

The safeguard on land enforced by *āiga* and *nu'u,* and the allocation of land for religious purposes as discussed above, is best understood in the concept of *faiā. Faiā* is the Samoan word best translated as 'relation' or 'connection.'[72] *Faiā* is the term that notes the relation and connectedness between individuals. For example, the *faiā* between two individuals may be described as siblings, parent-child, teacher-student, and so forth. However, *faiā* is not an exclusive term denoting relationship between humans. It also extends to describe the relation and connectedness between two separate but existing matters. Fatilua Fatilua, a New Testament scholar and lecturer at MTC, defines *faiā* as relation that "signifies the existence of an interconnectedness that holds everything together for better or for worse."[73]

This definition better suits the understanding of Samoans that all life is interconnected. The possibility of an active relationship between humanity and other life forms is real. Therefore, the relationship and interconnectedness between humanity and land is a fact, meaning individuals have *faiā* with land. In an individual's *faiā* with land, the *āiga* serves as common ground. The land belongs to *āiga* and the *āiga* is custodian of land; the individual belongs to *āiga*, and therefore is also custodian of the land. This *faiā* to land is the foundation to the Samoan individual's desire to protect the land as custodian. But their say as custodian is dependent on their engagement in *āiga* affairs.

The intentional safeguards set in place in both *āiga* and *nu'u* to protect Samoan land from permanent alienation hints to the Samoans perception of self. For Samoans, an individual's identity

[72] Stowers, "Historical Mamanu," 19;

[73] Stowers, "Historical Mamanu," 19; See also Fatilua Fatilua, "Faia Analysis of Romans 13: 1 – 7: Integrating A Samoan Perspective with Socio-Rhetorical Criticism," (MTh thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2017), 11.

is shaped by their relation to not only their immediate family, but to their ancestors. An individual is identified by their familial ties and kinship. They belong to a specific genealogy, they are a member of a specific *āiga, nu'u,* and *ītūmālō.* Membership to these entities also means connectedness to specific lands. Inheritance of these specific lands is an automatic birthright they share with their *āiga, nu'u,* and *ītūmālō.* This is why the Samoan honors the safeguards for their inheritance. Esera Jr Esera, a Samoan theologian and lecturer at MTC, best describes the Samoans relation to land:

> Land to the Samoan people holds significant values that are deeply entrenched within its culture. It is a source of life that represents their identity, heritage, and sense of belonging. Land in the Samoan language is *fanua* or *'ele'ele*. The word *fanua* can also be used to refer to the placenta or umbilical cord of an unborn baby; the source of life for the child while still in the mother's womb. The word *'ele'ele* can also mean blood, which biological life is dependent upon. These two Samoan translations explain the sacred connection the Samoan people have with the land. *Fanua* is where life is formed; 'ele'ele is what sustains life. Without *fanua* or *'ele'ele* there is no life.[74]

Protection of *fanua* and ensuring *āiga, nu'u,* and *ītūmālō* retain possession and authority of it is not only a Samoans priority, but their obligation to the future generations. Safeguarding *fanua* is how the Samoan sustains life, as it guarantees that the Samoans of tomorrow not only have something to depend on for survival, but something to call their own. Further highlighting this relationship of Samoans and their land, Iutisone Salevao stated:

> The relationship between land and the people is a symbiotic one operating to the mutual benefit of both parties. This sense of kinship is further underlined by the association of the term *fanua* with the human embryonic birth sac – underlining that the metaphorical origin of the land is the body of a mother. Burying the afterbirth – the *fanua* of one's birth – in the ground is a powerful symbol of the continuation of the cycle of life and an affirmation of the land as a living entity capable of both giving and receiving life…Taken in its entirety,

[74] Esera Jr Esera, "Land, Ecotheology, and Identity in Samoa," *Samoa Journal of Theology*, no.1 (2022): 102.

the relationship between human beings and the land from which they emerge spans the full cycle of life and death.[75]

If *fanua* is 'where life is formed and what sustains life,' then for the Samoan to offer their land to the Church, is symbolic of a commitment and sacrifice that can be interpreted as Samoans offering their very own lives to God.

1.6 Framework & Thesis Structure: *Igagatō, Matū palapala, & Pule*

The Samoan social structures of *āiga, nu'u,* and *ītūmālō* shaped the understanding of the Samoan individual. These institutions provided and enforced the rules and guidelines that governed social norms. At the helm of these institutions were the *matai,* tasked with being the visible leaders of these structures and most importantly, entrusted by the members of these respective groups to ensure that their well-being and interests are prioritized and taken care of. The *matai* likely garnered their prestigious positions through their *tautua,* resulting in their being honorably selected by *āiga* to represent them in the *nu'u,* and *ītūmālō.* Furthermore, their selection to be *matai* by the *āiga* members is symbolic of their trust that he will make decisions for the benefit of all members within the immediate context of their *āiga.*

Crucial in the *matai's* decision making is their allocation of land to *āiga* members for purposes such as food and worship and ensuring that the land remains under their *āiga's* authority for generations to come. Such a task is made possible with the presence of *matai* within the *fono* of both *nu'u* and *ītūmālō.* It is here where mutual respect for familial authority over land and other *āiga* affairs is further solidified. The *fono* in these respective contexts ensured that land boundaries were clear, concise, and respected. Prior to the arrival of missionaries and other European influences in Samoa, the *matai* system reinforced by the above social structures was untouched by any other social or political ideology. This is perhaps why prior to missionary arrival, "boundaries of lands within the *nu'u* were settled, as were the boundaries between one *nu'u* and the next, and between one *ītūmālō* and the other."[76]

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[75] Iutisone Salevao, "'Burning the Land': An Ecojustice Reading of Hebrews 6: 7-8," in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth,* ed. Norman Habel (London: Sheffield Publishing Company, 2000), 223.

[76] Le Tagaloa, "Sua le Lea – Toto le Ata," 44.

These same social structures, specifically the *āiga* and *nu'u*, became the target of the missionaries in their mission to convert the islands. And they targeted these groups by foremost building rapport with the *matai.* At the outset of their missionary work, the LMS implemented a 'mission station strategy,' where they set up mission stations in various *ītūmālō* with the help of various *matai, āiga,* and *nu'u.*

At these stations, a "European missionary resided, and from that centre he itinerated and sought to evangelize the different villages and groups of natives – often very numerous in his district."[77] The first location of these stations in Samoa was Sapapali'i on the island of Savai'i, the village of Malietoa Vaiinupo whom initially accepted the arrival of John Williams and the LMS, and granted permission for the initiation of the mission's work on his land. As the LMS garnered interest in Samoa, stations were then set up in other places. Like Sapapali'i, the land granted for the purpose of mission stations throughout Savai'i, Upolu, Manono, and Tutuila, were "given free" by *matai* and *āiga.*[78]

With interest inspiring the commute to Sapapali'i of Samoans from surrounding *nu'u* and even distant islands such as Upolu and Tutuila, and Malietoa sharing the new religion amongst his *āiga* and network of *matai,* new converts would return to their own *āiga* and *nu'u* with the Gospel and dedicate land to the cause of erecting the earliest churches. When John Williams returned to Samoa in 1832, he discovered while travelling to Amoa from Safotulafai, that a church had been built in Fusi where affiliates of Malietoa's family resided, at the approval of the recently converted *matai* and *āiga.*[79] In that same year, Tuimalealiifano Sualauvi, one of four paramount chiefs of Samoa residing in Matautu Falelatai in Upolu, also a relative of Malietoa, accepted Malietoa's advice to establish a church in Falelatai.[80] Tuimalealiifano designated a piece of his *āiga* land known as Matamatanonofo, the *tulaga maota* of his chieftaincy believed to be guarded by the *aitu*

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[77] Aukilani Tuiai, "The Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, 1962 – 2002: A Study of the Issues and Policies that have Shaped the Independent Church," (Ph.D. thesis, Charles Sturt University, 2012), 27.

[78] Enari, "A Christian Reflection on the Customary Land Tenure System," 66.

[79] Faasaoina Komiti, "A History of the LMS in Fusi Safotulafai," (BTh thesis, Malua Theological College, 2019), 110-111; see also, John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprise,* 115.

[80] David Mafua, "A History of CCCS Matautu Falelatai from 1830 – 1845," (BTh thesis, Malua Theological College, 2020), 15. See also, Oka Fauolo, *Vavega o le Alofa Laveai: O Le Tala Faasolopito o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2005), 39.

Tutogi.[81] Following the model exhibited in Fusi and Matautu Falelatai, other converts returned to their own *nu'u* and dedicated land to erect the earliest Christian churches in Samoa.

By 1837, missionaries had progressed in translating the Bible and teaching Samoans to read these translations.[82] Such progress called for the need for mass publication. A printing press was needed to publish educational resources in the Samoan language for mass distribution. Tuimalealiifano approved the dedication of a parcel of his *āiga* land in Matamatanonofo, specifically on a parcel named Peretania, for the cause of the missionaries.[83] Along the same time, demand for LMS teachers by *nu'u* began to rise, and the missionaries realized that their 'mission station strategy' was a failure. The need to establish a presence in every *nu'u* became a priority.[84] This was the driving inspiration behind the establishment of the seminary institute at Malua.

The early establishment of *nu'u* churches was perhaps a foreshadowing to the need of the LMS' strategic transition from the 'mission station' to the 'village church' and the necessity for a seminary institute. The European missionaries quickly observed that in the political and social sphere of Samoa, the *nu'u* was autonomous, and "true power in Samoa was localised at the village level and at subdistrict level where village alliances were forged…"[85] *Matai* and *āiga* throughout the islands had already dedicated land and erected buildings for Christian worship, proving the early receptiveness of the people to the LMS mission. All that was left was to supply each *nu'u* with a teacher.

The methods and strategies employed by the mission in their conversion of Samoa – mission stations, printing press, schools – required the building of facilities. But considering the relationship of Samoans to their land and the safeguards in place to protect land from alienation, the LMS's facilities could only be erected at the consent of *matai* and *āiga.* To the credit of the LMS, the missionary's ability to firstly build rapport with Malietoa, and eventually other *matai,*

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[81] Mafua, "A History of CCCS Matautu Falelatai from 1830 – 1845," 15-16.

[82] Stowers, "Historical Mamanu," 79.

[83] Mafua, "A History of CCCS Matautu Falelatai from 1830 – 1845," 24; Mafua notes that the name "Peretania," Samoan translation for Britain, was to commemorate where the LMS was originally from.

[84] Describing the 'failure' of the 'mission station strategy' and the need for 'village based Christianity,' Aukilani Tuiai wrote: "The missionaries expected to have a large resident population on the mission station as a pool to spread the gospel. However the missionaries discovered that Samoans would return to their villages rather than stay on or near the mission station. As a consequence the LMS were forced to abandon the 'mission station' strategy and focus on the village as a springboard for mission in what Forman called 'village Christianity.'" Tuiai, "The CCCS, 1962 – 2002," 27.

[85] Tuiai, "The CCCS, 1962 – 2002," 18.

made their desire to establish their facilities a reality. The locations of the first mission stations and the printing press, as well as the early church buildings, is evidence of the Samoans receptiveness to the new religion. But it also speaks to the reverence that they had for Christianity, especially considering that they would dedicate or "freely give" their inheritance of land – that is 'where life is formed and what sustains life' – to the cause of the LMS.

As the strategy of the LMS transitioned from 'mission station' to 'village church,' the need to be present in the *nu'u* was necessary. And as highlighted above, the *matai, āiga,* and *nu'u* gifted land to build the necessary facilities – church, minister's house, and even a parcel for plantation. All with the intent of embracing the mission. However, much of the disputes today from *āiga* and *nu'u* against the CCCS regarding rightful ownership of land have to do with this category of gifted land. As a consequence, the CCCS' General-Purpose Committee or *Komiti o Feau Eseese (KFE)* began deliberating on how the Church should respond to such issue:

> *Ua matauina e le Komiti o Galuega le tele o fanua o le Ekalesia o loo faigata lava le tulaga o loo ta'oto ai ona o aafiaga o le suia o foliga o aiga ma nuu mai le tulaga sa i ai anamua ina ua faia foa'i pe faatauina mai foi nei fanua.*[86]

> Translation:
> The Committee of Works has observed that many of the Church's land are situated in difficult areas as the occupants and landscape have changed since it (land) was first offered or purchased.[87]

The "difficulty" described is about the undertaking of tasks such as surveying and fencing the land and being met with pushback from the people who now live on the Church's lands. According to the report of the KFE, the lands on which the Church has legal ownership of – whether offered or purchased – had been re-occupied by people of the *nu'u* for a while since it was vacant of church facilities. This tension with people rejecting the Church's legal authority over

[86] Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa. "I'ugafono Komiti o Fe'au Eseese 02/08/23." 2024, 7.

[87] English translation provided by author.

land is not limited to the Church's vacant property. Even in *nu'u* that have a strong presence in the CCCS parish, the Church's right to land has been challenged. This issue also made its way into the deliberation of KFE:

> *Popolega i le tele o Fanua o le Ekalesia: Ua mautinoa le tele o faafitauli ua tutupu mai i le tele o Ekalesia ma Aulotu ona o fanua o loo tutū ai falesā ma maota o Faafeagaiga ma fale o Aulotu. Pe lē alagatatau ona taumafai e fai ma fanua umia sa'oloto ma faapepaina i le MNRE ina ia fo'ia ai le toe lōtea e tupulaga fou o le tele o aiga na mua'i faia foa'i a ua liulotu.* [88]
>
> Translation:
> Concerns About Many of the Church's Lands: Many issues have occurred for many of the churches and parishioners because of lands on which their church (building) and minister's residence and halls occupy. Is it reasonable (or justifiable) to try to make the lands 'free-hold' and register them with the MNRE (Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy) to avoid any disputes with the newer generations of families that originally offered these lands but have converted (out of CCCS)(?)[89]

The concern of KFE is the reneging of the descendants of those that gifted lands to the Church, especially the descendants that have left the CCCS. Examples of difficulties faced by *nu'u* parishes with these said descendants is their stopping of building projects, when parishes decide to construct a new church building or minister's residence on the same grounds on which it originally stood. In some cases, descendants interpret the taking down of the old facilities as the termination of the agreement made by their ancestors who gifted the lands in the first place. However, from the Church's perspective, the gifted land – although undocumented – was a permanent offering to the ministry. The contrast is the view of the descendants whose rebuttal is often the land was granted for the Church, but the authority remains vested in the *āiga.* So long as they feel necessary, they reserve the right to reclaim the land.

[88] Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa. "I'ugafono Komiti o Fe'au Eseese 02/08/23." 2024, 7.

[89] English translation provided by author.

The practice of gifting of land to the Church via the LMS began as soon as the missionaries first arrived in 1830. However, it is reasonable to believe that the permanent alienation of their land was incomprehensible for the Samoans of the 1830's. The understanding of land being inalienable carried well over into the 1870's.[90] Therefore, a strong case can be made that the lands gifted to the LMS in the 19th century by Samoans were done so with a customary land framework in mind. Simply put, in some way, shape, or form, the common belief was that the *āiga* and *nu'u* retained some sense of authority over the gifted land. Meleisea provides an example of such framework:

> …if a *matai* decided to bestow land upon a man who had married a girl of his family, such a *tofiga* (apportionment) of land would be motivated by the desire to attach the chief thus honored to the *āiga* of the chief who made the gift. In time the land would pass to the children of the union, who would be counted as a branch of the *āiga* through their mother and the land as a portion of the total *āiga* estate. Similarly, an *ali'i* might reward a subordinate by giving him a title and a portion of land to go with it…gifts of land were a mechanism for incorporating an outside or outside group into an *āiga* (and the *nu'u*) to which it belonged.[91]

The example above shows a permanent dedication of a portion of land to a person entering the *āiga* through marriage, or even an unrelated individual for their service. The land then is understood to be permanently subject to the authority and possession of the gift recipient and their descendants. However, the recipient is now officially an extension of the *matai's āiga,* and like the land, is also obliged to the authority of the *āiga*. Contrarily, land can also be dedicated to an outsider for temporal use. This conferral of land to an outsider is like the latter half of the above example in that it was a reward, but the termination of that gift came upon the death of the recipient. In both cases, the land is not alienated from the authority of the *matai* and *āiga,* but it has been permanently or temporarily granted for the recipient.

[90] Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 70, 91.

[91] Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 71.

This thesis seeks to explore a catalogue of land gifted to the LMS within the first century of being in Samoa from this temporal versus permanent standpoint. The modern tensions between *āiga, nu'u*, and the Church regarding gifted lands inspires the researcher's hypothesis that there are two ways of interpreting lands gifted to the Church (via LMS). These two understandings, *igagatō* and *matū palapala,* are the framework and interpretive lenses in which this research will explore the history of lands gifted to the Church. They are also the titles of the next two chapters, which present case studies of lands gifted to the Church in these contexts. The fourth chapter investigates the understanding and attitudes of the LMS missionaries of the concept of *pule* (authority) and concludes with research findings, presenting ways of approaching the issue of the research.

1.6.1 *Igagatō*

Igagatō is a compound word made up of the words *igaga* and *to.* The *igaga* is the "the name of a small fish having no bones."[92] According to the oral tradition of the village of Puleia in Savaii, the *igaga* was originally and exclusively harvested in Puleia. Ketty Iupeli, a graduate of MTC and a resident and descendant of Puleia, describes the significance of the fish to the identity of the people of Puleia:

> The name Puleia has its own traditional and cultural significance. It is made up of two words, *pule* meaning authority, and *i'a* meaning fish. It literally means 'authority over a fish, or *pule i le i'a.* The name finds its origins in a myth about a fish called *Igaga*…According to the myth, Sinalefiti, the daughter of the Fijian King or Tuifiti travelled to Samoa with two guides, Tagoa'i and Ili to visit her mother who was pregnant at the time. She brought with her a fish as a gift for her family in Samoa. The fish is called

[92] George Pratt, *Samoan Dictionary: English and Samoan and Samoan and English; With a Short Grammar of the Samoan Dialect* (Samoa: London Missionary Society's Press, 1862), 90. George Pratt was a missionary of the LMS stationed in Samoa from 1839 until his retirement in 1879. He is credited with translating the Bible into the Samoan language, and deemed as the "pioneer of translation in Samoa." See also, James Sibree, *A Register of Missionaries, Deputations, Etc. From 1796 to 1923* (London: London Missionary Society, 1923), 44; Clarke Stowers, "Historical Mamanu," 81.

> *Igaga*…Sinalefiti offered the fish as a gift for her brother, and gave the village the authority to harvest the fish.[93]

An alternate version of the *igaga* being gifted to Puleia is also recorded and in circulation. In this version, a Fijian woman of high rank, Sinafiti, travelled to Samoa to sight-see carrying three fish, one of which was the *igaga.* The people of Puleia greeted her with the finest of hospitalities and as a token of appreciation, she gifted them the *igaga.*[94] Both Iupeli and Siō's accounts present traditions about the *igaga's* significance and exclusivity to Puleia, and both stories present the *igaga* as a gift. However, the earlier version displays the gift as a homage to familial ties, whereas the latter presents the gift as gratitude to stranger's hospitality and service.

Iupeli recorded that the "phrase '*Igaga-tō*, where *tō* means 'to give' or 'be given,'" is a commemoration of Sinalefiti's gift. Iupeli notes that Puleia's interpretation of this phrase in relation to gifting, specifically in the context of awarding a non-*suli* with a *matai* title, emphasizes a sense of permanence:

> *Igaga-tō* is a Samoan phrase that is given to the gifting of something to someone. It is usually referred to occasions where a matai title is given to someone who is not related by blood, but because of service (*tautua*), the title is given as a gift. The gift therefore is given to the person and can be passed on to that person's off-springs; not to any other person. Such is also the nature of the gift of the *Igaga* given to the village of Puleia, that only in Puleia can people harvest this gift.[95]

Iupeli's interpretation of *igagatō* as a gift to an outsider resonates with Siō's version of the *igaga* story – that is, the gift was granted to non-relatives. However, Iupeli's interpretation of the phrase – the emphasis on the permanence of the recipient's *matai* and the continuity of that title as reflected in it being passed on to the recipient's descendants - stems from the centering of Puleia

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[93] Ketty Iupeli, "History of the Congregation Christian Church (CCCS) Puleia," (BTh thesis, Malua Theological College, 2020), 4-5.

[94] Gatoloaifa'ana Pesetā Siō, *Tapasā o Folauga i Aso Afā: Compass of Sailing in Storm* (Apia: U.S.P. Centre, 1984), 60.

[95] Iupeli, "History of the CCCS Puleia," 5.

as the recipient of Sinalefiti's gift in the story. Since Sinalefiti's brother is the recipient of the gift, (and therefore holds 'authority over the fish'), the natural progression is that those that descend from the brother have 'authority over the fish' as well.

The *igaga* is a seasonal fish, known to appear in the "autumn months" in the "mouth of rivers and in the lagoon."[96] Samoans carried the belief that in its season, the young fish enter the freshwater rivers from the sea; however, some observations have refuted this thought in claiming that the fish spawn in freshwater and end up in the sea because of the currents.[97] Elsewhere from Puleia, the *igaga* followed a similar pattern. At the Taelefaga Creek in the Fagaloa Bay, the *igaga* had bred annually up until 2005.[98] The seasonal appearance of the *igaga* means there is a time frame for harvesting it.

The seasonal appearance of the *igaga* is a momentous occasion celebrated by the people of Puleia. Rituals that have carried on since pre-Christianity Samoa have been maintained by the people of Puleia during the harvesting of the fish. Some of these rituals include the observation of certain *tapu.* Failure to oblige and keep the *tapu* consequently means that the "*Igaga* will not come ashore to the waterfall," where the harvest is usually collected.[99] But in the observation of the *tapu,* the people will not only succeed in harvesting the *igaga* when it proceeds to the waterfall, but they will also benefit from harvesting the fish when it returns down from the waterfall and towards the sea as a bigger, "full grown *igaga*" known as *anamagi*. The return of the *anamagi* signals the end of the harvest.

The season of the *igaga,* the gift of Sinalefiti, is received by Puleia and other villages where the *igaga* is sighted for a certain period. The harvesting cycle for the gift has a start and end time. Interpreting the gift of *igaga* as seasonal and temporal aligns with what Fanaafi Aiono – Le Tagaloa - renowned educator whose doctoral dissertation was a study of the Land and Titles Court of Samoa – described as the case of *igagatō* in relation to Samoan land:

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[96] E. Demandt, *Die Fischerei der Samoaner: Eine Zusammenstellung der bekannstesten Methoden des Fanges der Seetiere bei den Eingeborenen* (Hamburg: Lütcke & Wulff, E. H. Senats Buchdruckern, 1912), 67.

[97] Demandt, *Die Fischerei der Samoaner,* 91.

[98] Caroline Vieux and Jeff Kinch, "Marine Environment Monitoring Program for Fagaloa and Uafato Bays, Samoa: Final Report" (Report prepared for the Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation – International Pty Ltd at Townsville, Queensland, Australia (2010)), 26.

[99] Iupeli, "History of the CCCS Puleia," 12.

> An *igagatō* (gift of land) is usually given in recognition of kindness or assistance of an 'outsider' or a non-*suli*. The unspoken understanding is that when the person dies to whom the *igagatō* was made, so too does the gift. The gifted land then reverts to the holder of *pule*. In other words, the descendants of the recipient of the *igagatō* have no claim to the *igagatō* land. A gift of land is therefore not a permanent alienation according to Samoan custom.[100]

In Iupeli's interpretation of *igagatō,* the gift granted to the non-*suli* is the *matai* title. However, Le Tagaloa's dissertation states otherwise:

> In the same way, a gift of a *matai* title is possible. Such a gift is called *matupalapala*. The return of a *matupalapala* (gift of title) on death is also expected. Therefore the descendants of the *matupalapala* holder cannot succeed to the title. Today these two customary gifts are mixed up.[101]

Le Tagaloa's description of *igagatō* as temporal gifting of land and *matū palapala* as the temporal gifting of a *matai* title to a recipient seemingly goes against the general Samoan understanding of these two terms. As noted by Iupeli in his account, the gift of *igagatō* (according to the people of Puleia whom likely coined the term) is a permanent bestowal of a title to a recipient and his descendants. Ale Vena Ale – high chief of the village of Toamua and Samoan Member of Parliament representing the constitutency of Faleata No. 4 – would agree with the Puleia understanding of the concept of *igagatō,* but also extends the principles of *igagatō* gifting to include lands that are gifted:

> *O le igagatō, i lo'u a'u a lea malamalamaaga, o se foa'i. E lē toe mafai ona e toe aapa atu i ai. Tusa o oe e iai le pule, e aofia ai se suafa poo se fanua, ua e foai atu ma lou loto atoa i ai e avea ma mea, a faapea o se fanua mo le ekalesia, ia o na faaauau ai a lea mo le Ekalesia….e faapena foi la i se suafa matai, o le igagatō, aua e tele aiga e le pa'i i se*

[100] Le Tagaloa, "Sua le Lea – Toto le Ata," 180. Le Tagaloa's uses *igagato* instead of *igagatō.*

[101] Le Tagaloa, "Sua le Lea – Toto le Ata," 180.

suafa…e pei o le matai na te faia le foai, a faapea o se igagatō, e au a i ai oe ia ma lau fanau…[102]

Translation:

The *igagatō*, from my understanding, is an offering. (That) cannot be taken back. You (referring to *matai* and *āiga)* have the authority (over) a title or land, (and) have given it wholeheartedly to someone else's (possession)…if it is land for the Church, then the Church continues (holding authority) over it…this is also the case for titles, (given in) *igagatō,* because many families are not rightful inheritors of them…in cases of *matai* offering titles (in this manner) of *igagatō*, then you are now an inheritor of the title and so are your children (descendants).[103]

Ale's interpretation of land gifted as *igagatō* aligns with the centering of Puleia as the sole 'inheritors' of the *igaga* in Iupeli's account. Although centering the seasonal nature of the *igaga* provides basis for Le Tagaloa's interpretation of land gifted as *igagatō,* Puleia's suggested exclusive claim to the *igaga* as a gift for them and generations to come is the position that this research adopts in defining the concept of *igagatō* gifts. The researcher's stance on adopting the position of Iupeli and Ale over Le Tagaloa's regarding the definition of *igagatō* is further solidified by the earlier interpretations being the oral tradition and definition passed on to the researcher by his ancestors.

Therefore, in this thesis, *igagatō* refers to land willingly gifted by *matai* and *āiga* and/or *fono* and *nu'u* to the Church with the understanding that they were also relinquishing their immediate authority and ownership of the land, granting that authority and ownership to the recipient. Secondly, the land gifted in this nature was done so with the understanding that the recipient not only has authority over the said land, but their descendants will assume ownership upon the passing of the recipient. Thirdly, the boundaries of land gifted as *igagatō* are clear and concise on the part of the donor; that is, the borders of the gifted land are explicitly understood by both the donor and recipient. Another key characteristic of land(s) gifted as *igagatō* is that the

[102] Ale Vena Ale, interview by Fraser Tauaivale, September 21, 2024.

[103] English translation provided by author.

matai, āiga, fono, and/or *nu'u* that gifted the land did not offer it to the recipient for a specific usage; instead, the land was simply given to the recipient as a token of honor and appreciation, therefore the land was to be used as the recipient saw appropriate. Lastly, the gifting of *igagatō* is a *tofiga.*

Pratt notes that the root word of *tofiga* is *tofi*, a verb meaning 'to split up,' 'to divide,' or 'to give an inheritance.'[104] *Tofi* has also been translated as 'duty, responsibility, inheritance,' where 'inheritance' include "*fanua* (land), *aganu'u* (culture), *tu ma aga* (customs and traditions), *tala o le vavau* (myths and legends) and *tala fa'asolopito* (history)."[105] In this case, *tofi* is something that is transferred from generation to generation. *Tofi* as responsibility refers to "the roles and functions bestowed by one's family and village," a responsibility closely associated with *fa'asinomaga*, or "one's appointed place of being."[106] Considering 'inheritance' and 'roles and functions,' the Samoan's inherit their responsibilities, which include custodianship of their *fanua, aganu'u, tu ma aga, tala o le vavau,* and *tala fa'asolopito.* This is their 'appointed place of being,' to serve *āiga* and *nu'u* by upholding their inherited values and responsibilities.

Adding the suffix '*-ga*' would then change the word to *tofiga,* meaning 'an appointment,' 'an inheritance,' or 'a patrimony.'[107] The translation of 'inheritance' and 'patrimony' imply a valuable possession being passed on from generation to the next. But *tofiga* can also mean to "converge and appoint to place."[108] From this standpoint and in reference to *fanua*, the motivation of *tofiga* is to bring order, designate space and role, and foster a sense of belonging. And such motive is achieved when clear directions are understood regarding the terms and conditions of 'inheritance.'

The act of *tofiga* as bringing order through 'converging and appointing something to place,' and that 'something' being an 'inheritance' resonates with Meleisea's translation of *tofiga* as 'apportionment.' 'Apportionment' is an intentional distribution of something or sharing a resource

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[104] Pratt, *Samoan Dictionary,* 207.

[105] Salainaoloa Lisa-Maree Wilson, "A Malu I Fale Le Gagana, E Malu Fo'i I Fafo: The Use and Value of the Samoan Language in Samoan Families in New Zealand," (Ph.D. thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2017), 9.

[106] Albert Refiti, "Mavae and Tofiga: Spatial Exposition of the Samoan Cosmogony and Architecture," (Ph.D. thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2014),64.

[107] Pratt, *Samoan Dictionary,* 207.

[108] Refiti, "Mavae and Tofiga," 57.

amongst people. However, in the context of this research and notably of indigenous Samoan praxis, the end goal of *tofiga* - distribution or sharing - is to bring order into the *vā.*

Meleisea's examples in Section 1.6 shows *tofiga* as a means of permanently incorporating non-*suli* into *āiga* and consequently *nu'u.* It notes *tofiga* as bringing order through fostering a sense of belonging, and as a natural progression, a sense of *fa'asinomaga* (identity) for the 'outsider.' He provides another example of *tofiga* in action with people who have no links or ties to *āiga* in/and a *nu'u*:

> In the case of a chief who, as the result of misfortunes of war, wished to relocate himself and his *'āiga*, the allocation of land to him in another *nu'u*, with a *tūlaga maota* and a place in the rank hierarchy, would require the consent of the *fono*. Thereafter the newcomers would have perpetual obligation to the *nu'u*, its laws and political organisation. Transfer of land between Samoans always obliged the recipients of the land to accept the authority and common identity of the *āiga* and *nu'u* who bestowed it.[109]

The example above highlights how the gifting of land as *igagatō* is a permanent offer. Although the land – whatever the acreage – is transferred to the outsider permanently, it is indicative of bringing of the *matai/āiga* and/or *nu'u/fono* 'converging and appointing something into place,' and bringing the *vā* into order. The recipient of the gifted land is now a permanent part of the social structure of *āiga* and *nu'u,* and as part of their *tofiga,* the expectation is that they will remain on that 'apportionment' for generations until the end of time.

Igagatō is the first part of the framework used in analyzing lands gifted to the LMS, and the second chapter is dedicated to this interpretation of land gifted. Chapter Two discusses lands gifted in the spirit of *igagatō,* examining evidence that point to the Samoans understanding of the permanent relinquishing of *āiga* and *nu'u* land to the LMS. The chapter also explores the perception of the missionaries regarding this type of gift.

[109] Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 71.

1.6.2 *Matū Palapala*

The phrase *matū palapala* builds meaning in the incorporation of these two words: *matu* which can mean "a dry garment," "to put on dry clothes," "to be dry (A complimentary word to those returning from bathing)"; and *palapala* which can refer to "mud," blood," "muddy," "slime" or "sloppy."[110] *Palapala* also refers to the 'soil,' 'earth,' or 'dirt,' and when the term is spelt "*palapalā,"* the word can either mean "dirty" or "soiled." An oral tradition passed on to the researcher from his ancestors regarding the origins of the phrase situate the usage of the phrase in the Samoan traditional practice of hosting guests.

During commutes in ancient Samoa, upon the arrival of a travelling party to a host's residency, the host would offer a garment to his/her guests. The purpose of such a garment was for the guest to 'dry' off their sweat and the 'dirt' they had because of the journey. Therefore, the garment was to help the guest get a *'matū,'* and consequently, the garment would become *palapala* or soiled. At the end of the visit, the guest would leave the garment with the host – the rightful owner of the garment – prior to departing the residence. Therefore, the concept of *matū palapala* is a gift granted by an owner for the temporal use by their honorary guest; a gift which is returned after it serves the purpose of the guest or is no longer needed by the guest.

Land and *matai* titles are examples of things owned by *matai, āiga, nu'u* and *fono* that can be gifted to a non-heir as *matū palapala.* Describing a *matai* title gifted as *matū palapala* by a *matai* and his/her *āiga* to a non-*suli,* Ale Vena Ale explains the common understanding of the terms and conditions of this title for the recipient:

> *…a faapea o se matū palapala, e tau a na o oe…e uma loa oe then that's it. E lē mafai ona faaauau atu e (fanau)…* [111]

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[110] George Pratt, *Samoan Dictionary,* 61, 152, 163.

The phrase *matū palapala* is often spelled "*matupalapala"* by other sources, but this research intentionally separates the two words to align with the explanation of the concept as noted in Section 1.6.2 of this thesis.

[111] Ale Vena Ale, interview by Fraser Tauaivale, September 21, 2024.

Translation:

…if it is a *matū palapala*, then only you (may have it)…when you're done then that's it. It (title) cannot be carried on (by your children)…[112]

Another oral tradition of the understanding of the concept of gifts of *matū palapala* places emphasis on the word *palapala* – translated as 'earth' or 'soil.' These traditions shared with the researcher interpret gifts given in the spirit of *matū palapala* as temporary, citing that the term *palapala* notes the condition on which the gift is terminated; that is, once the recipient is buried in the *palapala* or simply upon their death, their possession and authority over the gift ends as well.

Within both interpretations, the main theme of *matū palapala* is the temporality of the gift. From a Western perspective, such a gift may be seen as 'insincere giving,' what other Europeans have derogatorily referred to as characteristics of the "Indian giver." However, when we consider the *faiā* of Samoans with their lands and titles, then the temporary bestowal of such gifts to a non-*suli* reflects the level of respect and honor *matai, āiga, fono,* and *nu'u* have granted to their honorary guest. Therefore, the temporality of such gifts does not diminish the honor and respect Samoans afford to the recipient. *Matū palapala* of lands and title reflect prestige of the recipient from the viewpoint of the donor.

Land gifted as *matū palapala* are granted for very specific purposes, just as *āiga* and *nu'u* land are allocated by *matai* and *fono* for very specific purpose. This is an example of the land gifted remaining under the authority of *āiga* and *nu'u,* despite the authority vested in its new temporal 'owner.' Once this purpose is fulfilled, or if the recipient no longer needs this land, then full authority reverts to the original owners.

Matū palapala lands are unique in that it grants the *āiga* and *nu'u* the flexibility to locate and relocate their honored guests to better plots of land as needed or as necessary. Being that the *matū palapala* land gift isn't a permanent site gifted to the recipient, Samoans understand that land as not being the only fixed position for their guest. For example, if a land was gifted as *matū palapala* to a non-*suli* to grow crops, if the *matai* and *āiga* feel that another accessible land that would yield better results for their honorary guest, then they can offer or simply redirect their guest

[112] English translation provided by author.

to this different land upon their desire. This is one of the flexibilities of lands gifted as *matū palapala.*

The most important characteristic of *matū palapala* land is that once the recipient dies, or once the recipient no longer needs the land for whatever purpose they originally used it for, then the gift reverts to the original owners. At the outset of the LMS mission in Samoa, especially considering that Samoans had little to no comprehension of permanent land alienation, it is most likely that the lands gifted to the Church were done so with the understanding of this framework. Chapter Three explores this category of land gifted to the LMS – providing insight on the perspective of the LMS regarding these lands and presenting evidence of the donors understanding these gifts as *matū palapala.*

1.6.3 *Pule*

Pule is commonly translated as "ownership or authority."[113] In relation to the Samoan understanding of land, *pule* of land is vested in the *matai* and *āiga.* However, *pule* in the Samoan context is complex in comparison to the European understanding of land ownership. The European notion of land ownership is an all-exclusive ownership of land that the registered owner may will to whom they please at any given time. However, the *pule* of Samoan land is communal:

> …*pule* is vested in a name, a matai title, and not a person…the *pule* will be exercised by the matai…the *pule* of the matai title was found to be vested in the *suli* of the title…[114]

Suli's exercise their authority on land through the careful selection of their *matai.* In turn, the *matai* is expected to allocate, distribute, designate and preserve land based on the benefit of the *āiga*, the ultimate *pule* of land. This logic ensures that land is maintained for the future generations to enjoy.

Land disputes between *āiga* and/or *nu'u* at Samoa's Land and Titles Court can be categorized into four types: "(i) disputes over *pule* of land (73.8 percent); (ii) disputes over boundaries (11.5 percent); (iii) confirmation of *pulefa'amau* (4.9 percent); (iv) banishment from

[113] Le Tagaloa, "Sua le Lea – Toto le Ata," 177; See also, Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 70.

[114] Le Tagaloa, "Sua le Lea – Toto le Ata," 177.

usage of land, residence, etc (9.8 percent)."[115] For the CCCS, tension in recent history from *āiga* and/or *nu'u* regarding lands on which CCCS facilities occupy fall under these previously mentioned categories as well:

> *…O le tele a o nu'u ma aulotu ua aliali le mea lea: ua fesiligia tuaoi, ua fesiligia foa'i, ua fesiligia mea uma lava…ua eseese uma loto o tagata, o fanau a aiga na tutupu mai ai ma faasino i ai fanua…*[116]
>
> Translation:
> …These issues have been evident in many *nu'u* and parishes: boundaries (of land) have been questioned; the offering (of land) has been questioned…there are diverse feelings from descendants of families that own these lands…[117]

The questioning of boundaries and the offering (that is, the terms and conditions on which the ancestors of these descendants had in mind when they offered the land for the CCCS' use), is a subtle exercising of an *āiga'*s *pule* over land. In the case where these gifted lands have already been registered under the CCCS as free-hold land, *pule* of such land is clearly vested in the Church; however, the questioning of the offering presents a two-fold misunderstanding over the *pule* of said land. Firstly, the misunderstanding may stem from the *āiga'*s belief that the land was gifted to the Church as *matū palapala.* Secondly, it could also stem from the *āiga'*s ignorance or lack of communication between the donors and their descendants regarding the land being an *igagatō*.

The Samoan concept of *pule* was eventually infiltrated by the European concept of land as private property and trade commodity:

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[115] Ron Crocombe and Malama Meleisea, eds., *Land Issues in the Pacific* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1994), 173.

[116] Taipisia Leilua interview by Fraser Tauaivale, September 11, 2024. Rev. Dr. Taipisia Leilua is an ordained minister of the CCCS, former lecturer at Malua Theological College, and is currently serving as the General Secretary of the CCCS.

[117] English translation provided by author.

> …before the arrival of the missionaries, there was no concept of a person owning their own land. Land belonged to the village, to the community. As missionaries put up fences and laid claim to what was theirs, the Samoans started to view land differently.[118]

This new way of understanding *pule* often collides with the oral traditions of *āiga* and *nu'u*, leading to tensions between these entities and the Church regarding *pule* of land. The fourth chapter investigates the LMS missionaries' attitudes regarding *pule* of the gifted lands. The chapter intends to identify whether the missionaries' understood the terms and conditions of lands gifted to the mission by the Samoans. The chapter also explores the response of the LMS to the indigenous concept of *pule* amid the changing political landscape of Samoa in their first century of work, including the introduction of the Committee and the European custom of land registration.

1.6.4 Findings & Recommendations

The Conclusion sums up the findings of the research. The researcher hopes to present a definitive thesis regarding the historical root of land disputes between the CCCS and *āiga* and *nu'u* regarding lands gifted to the Church. Furthermore, this section presents a means of addressing such issues if they may arise for the Church in the future.

1.7 A Samoan Interpretation & Literature Review

The framework signifies that the departure point of the thesis is an indigenous Samoan worldview. The research is influenced by the likes of Clarke Stowers – CCCS Church historian and current lecturer in Church History at MTC – who developed the *mamanu* framework to "recover the voice of our Pacific people…long been silenced by the colonial models of education."[119]

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[118] Grace Wildermuth, ""Heaven and Earth" Samoan Indigenous Religion, Christianity, and the Relationship Between the Samoan People and the Environment," (Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection, 2012), 16.

[119] Stowers, "Historical Mamanu," 24.

Stowers undertook the task of "re-reading the history of education in Samoa," a difficult task considering the available primary sources reflect European biases and disdain for Samoan practices.[120]. However, the key in the new interpretation is Stower's recognition of his Samoan-ness and incorporating that worldview into the re-reading and re-interpreting of the LMS biases reflected in the sources. In his comparative, contrastive, and relational analyses of the methods of education of pre-missionary Samoa and European influenced Samoa (as brought by the LMS), the *mamanu* framework was necessary to produce an alternative perspective regarding the quality of education that existed for Samoans before 1830, and the long-term effects of the LMS' strategies on Samoans.

Mamanu, or simply "patterns in figure work in cloth (*tapa*), clubs, sinnet or body (*Samoan Sogaimiti*)," is applied metaphorically in his research to portray the Samoan and European methods of learning as pieces of art that can co-exist to complement one another.[121] The hypothesis that the LMS *mamanu* undermined and overshadowed the indigenous Samoan *mamanu* in education was confirmed, and implications of such findings is reflected in the one-dimensional attitude that Samoans inherited from the LMS about learning: it is an activity confined to a space. Stowers was able to offer wisdom from the Samoan *mamanu* as a compliment to the adopted LMS *mamanu* that has become the status-quo, and that wisdom is the revival of extra-curricular activity with the *aoga o le faifeau* (CCCS minister's school for children) at the forefront of imparting indigenous wisdom.

Another endeavour to recover the Samoan voice from the margins in LMS history was conducted by Latu Latai. Latai - Samoan Church historian, former lecturer of Church History at MTC and current resident minister for CCCS Apia – set out to challenge "the perception that they (Samoan missionary wives) were mere attachments or extensions of men – marginal figures in evangelisation."[122] In his doctoral dissertation, Covenant Keepers: A History of Samoan (LMS) Missionary Wives in the Western Pacific from 1839 to 1979, Latai applied a "double vision" interpretation, "looking at the colonial experience from the islanders' viewpoint rather than that of the imperial powers."[123]

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[120] Stowers, "Historical Mamanu," 11.

[121] Stowers, "Historical Mamanu," 10.

[122] Latu Latai, "Covenant Keepers: A History of Samoan (LMS) Missionary Wives in the Western Pacific from 1839 to 1979," (Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 2016), 6.

[123] Latai, "Covenant Keepers," 6.

Literature exists on the role of Samoan missionaries that were sent out in the Pacific under the authority of the LMS. One of the works highlighting the role of such missionaries include *O Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i: O le Talafaasolopito o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa,* written by former General Secretary of the CCCS, former principal of MTC, and authority on Samoan Church History, Oka Fauolo. The work was dedicated to presenting an account of the history of the CCCS since 1830 until the publication in 2005. An entire section of the book, totalling 560 pages, provides a history of the Samoan missionaries and some archival writings from these men.

However, the void in the account is an emphasis on the role of Samoan women, the missionaries' wives, in the overall mission. From the days of those missions, there exists an archive of accounts from the Samoan missionaries themselves. Yet for Latai, in presenting his use of 'double vision,' not only did he critically analyze the primary accounts of white LMS members about the missionary experience, but he also had to be aware of the unavoidable male biases in the writing of the Samoan missionaries. If 'double vision' was to provide an understanding of colonial history from the experience of the islanders, then a recovery of the voice of islander women would have to take it a step further to recover the silenced voices in the islander patriarchal system that was in play in those days.

Stowers and Latai have set the standard for this research's approach. In the researcher's analysis of the primary evidence used in this undertaking, the general attitude of the European missionaries regarding land was that it was a means to an end. For example, much of the deliberations discovered referencing land in a collection of minutes of the LMS Samoa District Committee (SDC), the governing authority of the LMS work in Samoa in the 1800's, had to do with either the acquisition of land for the mission, or the confirmation of the Committee's adamant decision to not sell any properties "secured" for the LMS. Yet as early as 1840, the missionaries did understand that all Samoan land was under the authority of Samoans.

Take for instance in 1840, the missionaries were made aware of a rumor that had been circulating in Sydney, Australia about the "relative ease with which fortunes may be made in Samoa."[124] Although at the outset, the LMS was clear about being an apolitical organization, noting that they were also "not inclined directly to interfere in any schemes of colonization," their

[124] London Missionary Society (LMS), "Samoan District Committee, Minutes of Meeting, March 30 1840," Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, National University Samoa, PMB 95 (digital microfilm).

opinion on matters affecting the 'natives' (as they called Samoans and indigenous people of their mission lands) were generally understood by their fellow Europeans. Addressing the rumor in Sydney, the missionaries were inclined to let their opinion be known to immigrants "who may attempt to rush to Samoa":

> …whatever come ought to comply with the laws of the Islands in matters between themselves and the natives.
>
> We by also to state it as our opinion that the representations which have been made in Sydney relative to the ease with which fortunes may be made in Samoa are much exaggerated and may very likely mislead. We know not which or to what extent the land owners would be disposed to sell their land; but we do know that the land is all appropriated, to the very summit of the mountains.[125]

It is clear here that missionaries understood that all Samoan land was under the authority of Samoans in some way, shape or form. And within the first decade of the mission work, the missionaries were beneficiaries from the relationships established with the various *matai* in the islands. On these already owned lands, several mission stations stood as well as houses for residency. However, it is unclear whether the missionaries were under the impression that they had been recipient of free land, or whether they understood the lands within the Samoan framework of gift giving.

Considering Meleisea's argument[126] that Samoans did not fully grasp the concept of permanent alienation of land in the 19th century, even if the missionaries perceived their offering of money or goods to the Samoans as an 'exchange' for land, the logic of the offer is likely to have been misinterpreted by the locals. A little over a decade since their arrival in Samoa, the mission had a station and/or house in "Safune, Avao, Palauli, Matautu, Sapapali'i, Salailua in the island of Savaii, and Apia, Vaiee, Matautu (Falealili), Fasitootai, Fasitoouta, Saluafata, Lepa, Lalomanu, Matautu (Falelatai) for the press work, in the island of Upolu, as well as Apai at Manono, Leone

[125] LMS, "Samoa District Committee, Minutes of Meeting, March 30 1840."

[126] For further reading, see Malama Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa."

and Pagopago in Tutuila."[127] All of which, at least from the perspective of the locals, were freely given.

This attitude of offering land to the mission is also recorded by the LMS missionary George Turner, one of the missionaries tasked with the establishment of the Samoan seminary. En route to seek land for this undertaking in 1844, he observed:

> When we were in search for a site on which to erect our own institution premises, the chiefs and people in various places were so anxious to have us in their neighbourhood, that they offered us, free of any charge, as much land as we pleased. "Here is our village," said a chief, "just say the word, and we shall all clear off to another place, and let you have the entire settlement."[128]

Turner observed what was the common desire from the Samoans in the 19th century. This was an outward reflection of their receptiveness and faith to the Gospel mission. From a Samoan lens, hosting the mission on their grounds was a symbol of accepting this new faith and rejecting the old one. Apportioning and dedicating land to the mission and their cause was a matter of faith. It was a sign that the new religion had fully taken ground in the sphere of *āiga* and *nu'u.* This is why the missionaries had an ease in accessing land for their facilities in the first century of the mission. The Samoans wanted and needed this new God in their space, to live and be with them.

This is the significance of gifting land from the Samoan perspective. It reflects faith. However, the weight and gravity of such a faith practice has not received the proper attention, therefore making land gifting a footnote in the LMS history. Clarke Stowers, Church Historian and lecturer for the CCCS and MTC, favors such a claim as noted in his Master's thesis:

> Perhaps it was due to their understanding of the European missionaries when the Samoans donated their lands for schools and churches. This offering of lands was part of the

[127] Sarasopa Enari, "A Christian Reflection on the Customary Land Tenure System," 66.

[128] George Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia: Missionary Life, Travels, and Researches in the Islands of the Pacific* (London: John Snow, Paternoster Row, 1861), 128

contributions of the Samoans to the development of formal education. Yet, this is ignored by most history records as if offering lands for school was not important.[129]

But Stowers also highlights an alternative interpretation of the motive behind land gifting:

> Presumably the giving of lands to the missionaries was one way of getting rich. Most likely, Christianity or the Christian life was a means to that end. The end, of course, or what was foremost in the mind of the people was the acquisition of material wealth…Perhaps the same perception was in the minds of the people when engaging with formal education; to succeed in life was to be educated.[130]

The logic resonates with John Williams' recollection of a speech delivered by Fauea, a Samoan man who joined John Williams enroute to Samoa from Tonga with his wife, to his peers when they first arrived in Samoa:

> He told them also of the number of Island which has become lotu Tongataboo, the Haapae, Rarotogna Tahiti, and a great number of other Islands the names of which we had forgot, and he said they are all much better since they embraced Christianity. Wars have ceased among them. Ships visited them without fear and anchored in their harbours and brought them an abundance of Property. And you can see he observed that their God is superior to ours. They are clothed from their head down to their feet and we are naked. They have got large ships and we have only got these little canoes. On hearing Faaueas speech they all exclaimed It would be good to lotu too.[131]

Although Stowers' proposed suggestion of Samoans intention in land gifting aligns with some of the attitudes held about association with the mission, this research takes an alternate stance on the matter. The basis of the refute firstly lays in the fact that the introduction of the LMS to Samoa was not the first exposure of Samoans to Europeans or their material wealth. Secondly,

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[129] Stowers, "Historical Mamanu," 23.

[130] Stowers, "Historical Mamanu," 23.

[131] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams,* 68.

even before the missionaries arrived, "Individual chiefs granted land on occasion to European sailor" within the parameters of their customary framework.[132] And lastly, the interest of the Samoan people in the God of the missionaries reached an extreme in the initial year of the mission leading many to reach out to rogue sailors who settled in Samoa for a while to teach them about this new religion.[133]

The alternative views to Stower's suggestion would then be firstly, the gifting of land was an act of faith. Or secondly, the spirit of inter-village competition, intertwined with status, drove people to provide mission with land. Simply put, people wanted others to see their outward commitment to the LMS, and the missionaries to know that they are highly regarded by the donors. It could've been a matter of instant gratification.

Literature does exist mentioning lands gifted by Samoans to the LMS. Sarasopa Enari's Bachelor of Divinity thesis titled A Christian Reflection on the Customary Land Tenure System and Modern Development in Samoa.[134] Addressing the Samoan context of 1982, when the demand for modernization appeared to threaten the security of the Samoan Customary Land System, Enari provided a sort of theological defense of the Samoan Customary Land System. The focus was responding to a potential influence of individualistic culture that sought to undermine the Customary system for the sake of profit and modernizing Samoa.

A section of his writing is dedicated to an analysis of the CCCS lands, providing a critique of the Church's financial demands on the parishioners and their lack of utilizing the free-hold lands to ease such burdens on the people. Here, he provides a bit of an historical account on some of the land gifted freely to the Church through the missionaries of the LMS. He also highlights the practice of gifting land for church building, minister's residence, and minister's plantation at the *nu'u* level, highlighting the significance of such land gift to the Church from a Samoan perspective. However, the overall scope of the undertaking provided means in which the Church could use the lands in helping alleviate some of the financial issues experienced in the 1980's.

Oka Fauolo's *Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i* dedicates a chapter to brief historical accounts about the congregations at local *nu'u* throughout Samoa, specifically those under the CCCS.

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[132] Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa,* 69.

[133] Faletoese, *O Le Tala Faasolopito O Le Ekalesia Samoa [L.M.S.]*, 12.

[134] For further reading, see Sarasopa Enari "A Christian Reflection on the Customary Land Tenure System and Modern Development in Samoa."

Although these accounts mainly highlight the year in which the parishes began and a history of ministers and wives who served in these *nu'u,* there are instances in which he provides statements on which *matai* and *āiga* of the *nu'u* gifted land to the LMS for the building of the necessary facilities of worship and minister's residency. However, Fauolo's main intent in the book was to provide an overall history of the Church.

Featunai Liuaana – Samoan Church Historian and minister of the CCCS, also a former lecturer of Church History at MTC – undertook his doctoral dissertation to study the Samoan LMS Church and its involvement and impact on Samoa's struggle for independence.[135] The study examines the LMS in the years of 1900 – 1962, a part of the period also covered in this research. Although his scope covers Samoa's experience with the administrations that had much to do with the alienation of customary land (Germany and New Zealand), the focus is more on the social and political movements that arose in Samoa and within the LMS because of colonialism. However, he does make mention of land given to the Methodist mission by Lilomaiava of Satupaitea[136] and land gifted by Mata'afa Tuiatua Fagamanu, a former Methodist and former 'LMS Supporter,' to the Catholic mission in their initial stages in Samoa.[137] Such evidence highlights that the initial step of getting footing in the islands for these missions depended on Samoans gifting land.

Another renowned Samoan Church historian that has mentioned a bit of the CCCS land in his research is Aukilani Tuiai, a CCCS minister and former Church History lecturer at MTC. His doctoral dissertation analyzed issues experienced by the CCCS from 1962 to 2002, critically examining the policies established because of these issues and the impact of such decisions on the Church.[138] The study was a careful examination of the "institutional nature of the Church, depicting mostly matters to do with finance, management, and much less to do with worship, mission and community life."[139]

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[135] For further reading, see Featunai Liuaana, "Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900 – 1962," (Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 2001).

[136] Liuaana, "Samoa Tula'i," 11.

[137] Liuaana, "Samoa Tula'i," 16.

[138] For further reading, see Aukilani Tuiai, "The Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, 1962 – 2002: A Study of the Issues and Policies That Have Shaped the Independent Church," (Ph.D. thesis, Charles Sturt University, 2012).

[139] Tuiai, "The CCCS, 1962 – 2002," 5.

Tuiai notes that a contributing factor to the LMS' success when they transitioned into the 'village church' model was the "inherent pride and inter-village competitiveness."[140] The autonomy that local *nu'u* had allowed for such 'pride' to exist. And this benefitted the LMS as an organization because their presence in every district and village drove local *nu'u* desire to ensure that they were the most outwardly dedicated to the mission. This desire was reflected in the material donations/offerings to the mission, which helped in creating "a financially self-sufficient church in Samoa."[141]

George Turner's observation of Samoans offering their land to him for the seminary resonates with Tuiai's comment on 'inter-village competitiveness.' Every convert wanted to give everything for the mission, including their inheritance of land. Although Tuiai's study discusses a range of policies and motives of the CCCS, the mention of land related policies discusses decisions the Church made relating to land, but the attention isn't centered on how these lands were originally acquired. For example, the Church established the Development Committee in 1966 to "utilise Church land so as to generate funds," a decision that failed to bring in any money.[142] Consequently, districts of the Church called for the land to be "leased rather than 'developed' by the Committee."[143]

Outside of the failed plantation developments, the Church also sold land amidst financial constraints in the early 1980's. To pay for the loan used to finance the construction of the Church's six-storey John Williams Building, the Church opted to sell land they owned in Tuese and Tiapapata, "which had an estimated value of approximately $4.6 million."[144] The research highlights the significant loss the Church experienced when the congregations of American Samoa decided to leave the CCCS in the 1980's. Interestingly, Tuiai notes that some of the key losses in this separation included "land, property and finances that were registered under the CCCS."[145]

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[140] Tuiai, "The CCCS, 1962 – 2002," 40.

[141] Tuiai, "The CCCS, 1962 – 2002," 40.

[142] Tuiai, "The CCCS, 1962 – 2002," 171.

[143] Tuiai, "The CCCS, 1962 – 2002," 171

[144] Tuiai, "The CCCS, 1962 – 2002, 148.

[145] Tuiai, "The CCCS, 1962 – 2002," 146. The split of the American Samoan churches made up the American Samoa District of the CCCS. Disagreements over policies and decisions caused a rift between the American Samoa constituency and the CCCS, and it culminated in the establishment of the Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa. The CCCS eventually agreed to grant all land and properties in the name of the CCCS that were in American Samoa to the CCCAS. This research acknowledges that many of the land in American Samoa were

The mention of land by Tuiai is usually in reference to how land was used by the Church to address growing concerns on the islands. In other words, land is referred to here as property and commodity, an asset to be used, which is understandable considering the research was dedicated to analyzing the Church as a corporation. However, Tuiai noted before the Church schism, a high school to be built in Tutuila was approved at the 1971 CCCS General Assembly. Relating to the faithful giving of land by Samoans, the Church's focus was funding the building itself because they received a generous gift of 10 acres of land from Fuimaono Tu'inanau.[146] This note proves that even after Samoans' colonial experience resulting in much land alienation, the ancestors of Samoa still proudly carried this tradition of gifting their inheritance for use of the Church.

Academic scholars had briefly mentioned lands acquired by missions; however, there is little to no direct discussion of lands acquired by the LMS in the 19th century. For instance, in Fanaafi Aiono Le Tagaloa's doctoral dissertation, she briefly states the following regarding the missionaries and land:

> When the first missionaries arrived in Savaii, in 1830, Samoa's population was an estimated 47,000. They found a "small-scale, homogenous society based on subsistence agriculture" where social, economic and political structures were based on the pivotal relationship between the matai titles and land control. The control of resources was connected to status, or rank, which was in turn linked to responsibility for its administration and redistribution, and maintained through the expectation and practice of reciprocity…. In the beginning it was only the missions that acquired property for church purposes, with a few traders and officials securing holdings in or near Apia.[147]

Specifically mentioning lands gifted to the Church since 1830, Le Tagaloa noted:

> Many of the gifts of land have been made to the Church. As is well known, in Samoa the Church has been grafted onto the customary structures of society. This is evidenced by the

also gifted to the missionaries of the LMS in the 19th century. However, due to reasons of scope, this research focuses solely on lands gifted to the LMS in Samoa, or land that is or was under the LMS Samoa/CCCS.

[146] Tuiai, "The CCCS, 1962 – 2002," 98.

[147] Le Tagaloa, "Sua le Lea – Toto le Ata," 45.

> massive church buildings one cannot help but notice when one visits Samoa and the stereotypical classification of Samoans as very religious. Ever since the acceptance of Christianity in Samoa in 1830, land has been gifted to the Church, which has become one of the major land owners in Samoa. As in any disposition, the donor has to have pule to make the gift. Judging by the decisions considered, it was usual for the land to revert to the holder of pule once the Church's use of it had ended…however, some of these gifts of land were intended to be in perpetuity…in such cases, a permanent disposition, or a true alienation took place. Most of these gifts to the Church were made before the adoption of the Constitution or any colonial legislation limiting the alienation of customary land…The suli may have also agreed to make non-reversion a term of the gift.[148]

Le Tagaloa identifies two methods of gifting lands to the Church, the means identified by this thesis as *igagatō* and *matū palapala*. This thesis takes Le Tagaloa's identification a step further by analyzing case studies and identifying lands gifted to the CCCS within these categories of land gifts. The priority of this research is the uncovering of the historical root of the disputes over authority of land that the CCCS has experienced in recent times. The focus is on lands granted for chapel/church building and mission dwellings. However, just as important as that goal, is the illuminating of the cultural significance of Samoans gifting land to the LMS. This is an act of faith, an act of love, a declaration of welcoming God to the *āiga* and *nu'u*. Regardless of the terms and conditions associated with the gifting, the fact that the ancestors of Samoa were willing to set apart a part of their inheritance for the LMS is a foreshadowing of their willingness to offer all that they have and all that they are to be a part of God's family.

1.8 Methodology: Re-reading From a Samoan Perspective

Bringing this angle of history into light, the undertaking examined mission sources including minutes of the LMS Samoan District Committee meetings, as well as various correspondences from mission archives. The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (PMB) holds a significant archive of primary sources and first-hand accounts as documented by the missionaries

[148] Le Tagaloa, "Sua le Lea – Toto le Ata," 181.

who labored in Samoa. A collection of LMS Samoan District Committee meeting minutes from as early as 1836 is stored by the PMB, along with correspondences between the LMS and various parties including but not limited to the German and New Zealand governments during their colonial rule in Samoa. The PMB sources were accessible digitally through the National University of Samoa and the University of the South Pacific campus at Alafua, Samoa.

The researcher was able to access a selection of sources through the Alexander Turnbull Library Collections stored at the National Library of New Zealand in Wellington, New Zealand. These sources include correspondences between the LMS Samoa District Committee and business entities and local correspondences between the LMS Samoa and other parties in Samoa. Copies of some of the LMS's land titles and deeds were available, but they were from transactions post 1900's. The sources available were accessible via microfilm. Another source for the primary evidence used in this research is stored at MTC. Minutes of the meeting of the South Seas Committee, the governing body of the LMS mission in the South Pacific, are accessible here through microfiche. With the help of the CCCS Commissioner for Lands and Buildings, Loia Kolia, the researcher was able to access land records including titles and deeds, as well as other documentations, including official documents signifying customary land being gifted permanently for the Church, and a court document regarding the CCCS land at Tofuola and Malua.

This research is critical of the inherent European biases embedded in these sources. But these sources offer a glimpse into the context of the period studied. Pertaining to land, the goal of the research was to approach these sources and analyze and interpret them from the framework presented in the previous section.

Issues of the LMS and CCCS publication known as the *Sulu Samoa* were also used in this research. Although the earliest publications are written in the Samoan language, this medium was at first dominated by the missionaries' writings. However, the *Sulu Samoa* provides great insight into the happenings of the LMS and Samoa in the 19th century, therefore being a valuable source to the research.

A collection of theses from graduates of MTC, stored at the institution's library, were very helpful. Some of the graduates dedicated their research to recording historical accounts of the establishment of the LMS Church in their *nu'u.* To counter the lack of literature available on the establishment of these Congregations, the students conducted interviews with villagers, some of which are used in this thesis as second-hand sources. They also provided significant information

for this research including names of *matai* and *āiga* that gifted their lands to build churches and missionary/minister residencies.

Although there is a scarcity in sources available that really convey the Samoan's attitudes and beliefs regarding the lands gifted to the LMS, this research finds this as a historical gap to be filled. The method of re-reading these sources from the framework presented, and interpreting the events as recorded in these sources with this hermeneutical lens, will hopefully provide an alternative way of understanding lands gifted to the LMS, and therefore definitively provide an understanding of the stem of the land disputes happening to the CCCS regarding gifted land.

1.9 Summary

The recent disputes between *āiga* and *nu'u* against the CCCS requires an examination of the history of lands gifted to the Church, especially lands gifted within the first century of the LMS in Samoa. Although documented evidence such as land titles and deeds are a convenient way to definitively settle these types of disputes, these sources only tell the end of the story – the land now belongs to such and such. However, hidden within and beneath this evidence of ownership are stories of deciding between maintaining the old customs or abandoning them for new ones; stories of people helping the mission get on their feet; stories of regret; stories of commitment to God, and the desire to set a place for Him in *āiga* and *nu'u*; and stories of transformed lives and lives that were willing to be transformed.

These are the diverse emotions tied to the story of land gifting when interpreted from the Samoan worldview. Such a worldview informs and shapes the framework for this thesis as it journeys to present a case for a possible root of the land disputes. And in applying this worldview to the re-reading of the historical materials available, the researcher hopes to present an exploration that could help in the resolution of such tension.

Chapter 2
Lands Gifted as *Igagatō*

2.1 Introduction

This chapter argues that although the permanent alienation of land was incomprehensible to the Samoan mind, there was land that was gifted to the LMS in the customary framework of *igagatō* – a gift to the LMS 'converging and appointing' their permanent space within the Samoan landscape and community. A component of this argument is that land granted as *igagatō* was space allocated for LMS usage with specified boundaries, but without an exclusive purpose attached to the terms and conditions. The characteristic of *igagatō* is that the land was granted without such attachment, and the gift was simply made to the LMS as a people/entity. This means that *igagatō* land are land that Samoans willingly gifted to the mission, simply because they were the LMS.

Igagatō was communally given. This sense of community involves not only the *matai* and *āiga*, but representatives of the *nu'u* or the *fono* as well. This communal giving is significant in that it reflects the notion of the *nu'u* officially welcoming the LMS as inheritors of the designated space. Another characteristic of *igagatō* is the mutual understanding between Samoans that within the boundaries allotted by the donors, everything on the premises was LMS, including the buildings and people. The boundary then, is clear and concise.

Another sign of *igagatō* discussed in this chapter is the involvement of the descendants of the original owners in the protection of the allotted space gifted to the LMS by their ancestors. Such defense and/or confirmation from the descendants is evidence of their inherited understanding that within decided boundaries, the land had already been given by their ancestors to the LMS, relinquishing their power and authority over the land.

Like *matū palapala*, *igagatō* is 'freely given.' Although mission writings may suggest otherwise, this chapter carries the opinion expressed in the previous chapters - that the Samoans did not understand the notion of 'private property' and 'trade commodity' before 1889. However, the practice of converging a new *matai* and *āiga* into a *nu'u,* therefore permanently allotting a specified land for this new member of the community and their descendants, was the framework in which the Samoans understood a permanent transfer of land happening as discussed in Chapter 1. This was the case for the land granted to the LMS for the missionary seminary at Malua that

will be the focus of this chapter. Although the mission needed space for a specific purpose, but this chapter will provide evidence to suggest that a school building and land were not necessarily the main attachment to the gift given by the *āiga* and *nu'u* to the LMS. Instead, the land was apportioned with the understanding that it was to be a permanent land for the mission for generations to come, therefore forfeiting the authority of *āiga* to the land, and transferring it to the LMS and its *suli.*

2.2 Malua

The most notable example of *igagatō* gifted to the LMS is the land on which the Malua Theological College stands on today. The institution is located on land known as 'Malua' or 'Maluapapa,' but is also situated on the land known as 'Tofuola.' Today, the land hosts not only the theological college, but is the meeting grounds and headquarter of the CCCS. Since 1844, Malua has been in continual possession of the LMS, and today, the CCCS is the legal authority over the land. Although titles and deeds are evidence of land ownership in the modern context, this section explores the evidence of Malua being an *igagatō,* granted from *matai* and *āiga* and *nu'u,* for the permanent 'converging and appointing' of the LMS into the Samoan landscape.

2.2.1 Faults of the 'Mission-Station Strategy'; Demand for 'Village' Centered Approach

In 1836, the first group of European missionaries of the LMS assigned to work in Samoa arrived in the islands. They acknowledge the success of the Tahitian teachers since the commencement of their work in Sapapali'i, hoping to build on that success. Noting the progress made in Savai'i, the LMS SDC reported:

> …the greater part of the districts and settlements on Savaii…besides large and flourishing congregations and schools at Sapapali'i they found chiefs & people of our Lotu in 22 out of the 30 districts into which the island is divided…in all parts there is the most urgent desire for teaching both as ministers and schoolmasters…since their residence, about ten chiefs & their people have come over to them, and that a considerable impulse has been

> given to our mission. But that from the extent and thick population of several of the districts, and the difficulty in travelling, it is quite impossible that thousands of these people can receive anything more than occasional visit, and that therefore there exists the most urgent necessity for further help.[149]

The SDC recognized the need for more missionaries to carry out the work. The Tahitians through their visits in neighboring *nu'u* had been able to build rapport with *matai* and *āiga* throughout the islands. However, Sapapali'i remained the center of their work, and it was there that most of their labors were conducted. Land had been allocated by Malietoa on his *āiga* estates for 'schools,' but the potential of the mission was yet to be reached. The missionaries recognized that the LMS now had a presence throughout the islands, at least in the island of Savai'i, but the manpower to fully create a stronghold in these places was lacking. In 1835, a year prior to the arrival of European missionaries, efforts had been made to carry the LMS success over on Upolu. Teachers were assigned to Falelatai, Mulifanua, and Saleimoa. However, these *nu'u* were among Malietoa's network of familial connections. There wasn't a real geopolitical strategy behind their appointments, that is apart from Falelatai, where the Tuimalealiifano – paramount title of A'ana – resides.

John Williams recognized the monopoly held by Malietoa over the teachers in the previous years, and therefore the SDC sought to infiltrate his network by establishing their own relationship with 'important' *matai.* At a meeting between the SDC and the teachers and Samoan *matai*– "Malietoa principal chief of parts of Savaii & Upolu, and three of his sons, Malietoa one of the chiefs of Manono, Lilomaiava, chief of Falelatai Upolu, Pogai chief of Upolu, Pomale, son of the principal chief of Tutuila & Amuamu warrior of Leone and several minor chiefs,"[150] – these *matai* agreed to an understanding between them and the LMS like the deal made between Malietoa and John Williams. They agreed to learn more about the new religion, but also be protectors of the missionaries, granting them whatever they may need for the support the mission. Needless to

[149] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, 27th & 28th September 1836."

[150] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, 10th June 1836."

mention, an unspoken part of the deal would also be the allocation of their respective *āiga* and *nu'u* land for the erection of mission facilities such as chapels/schools and dwelling houses.[151]

The mission commenced with this agreement on the table, and the missionaries and the teachers continued their work – serving from a central station and visiting neighboring *nu'u* to build rapport with the people and spread the Gospel. More missionaries and teachers would arrive soon after and the SDC delegated them to station in *nu'u* – usually where there was already land allocated for chapel - as they deemed necessary. As the mission progressed in these years, the missionaries recognized that "further progress in Samoa would depend upon their being able to train efficiently a body of Samoan teachers."[152]

The autonomy of the Samoan *nu'u* became recognized as a barrier to the goal of the 'mission station strategy' to "create single-congregational districts."[153] With people from *nu'u* without a missionary or teacher commuting to learn from the stations, the missionaries found a common trend with their experiences, a permanent residency at the host *nu'u* was not considered by the travellers. They would always return to their own *nu'u.* Recognizing this norm and acknowledging the lack of human resources to allocate to each *nu'u,* the development of local Samoan teachers to fill this void became a priority.

2.2.2 Locating Land: A New *Nu'u* on Sacred Soil

In early efforts to address this issue, by 1843, missionaries were stationed in various areas of the islands:

> For Savaii: Sapapalii – C. Hardie; Palauli – A. Macdonald; Salailua – A. Chisholm; Matautu – George Pratt and Falealupo – George Drummond. In Upolu: Apia – W. Mills; Sagaga – W. Day; Lepa – W. Harbutt; Leulumoega – J.B. Stair and Henry Nisbet; while Vaiee – G. Turner.[154]

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[151] By 1836, these respective *matai* had already allocated land for chapels; and there were mission dwellings on lands in Sapapali'i, Falelatai, and Manono since these *matai* were already hosts to the Tahitian teachers.

[152] Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'asāmoa," 230.

[153] Tafesilafai Lavasii, "To Supply Them With Knowledge: A History of the Samoan Mission Seminary 1844 – 1875," (BD Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1984), 19.

[154] Lavasii, "To Supply Them With Knowledge," 9.

Teachers labored in the various 'out-stations,' continuing in the path set by those who came more than a decade earlier. At a meeting on March 21st, 1844, the decision to establish a school to educate 'native teachers' was made, and the SDC assigned missionaries to bring the project into fruition:

> That a situation be selected on which to erect buildings for the proposed institution by the Brethren Hardie, Day, Mills, and Turner and that we hereby authorize them to purchase a suitable piece of ground for the contemplated object.[155]

This newly formed committee was hereby given the responsibility of identifying suitable land for the institution. Up to this point, land on which the mission had chapels, and erected dwellings and schools, belonged to the earliest converted *matai* and *āiga.* The missionaries were allocated funds to 'purchase' these spaces, and the Samoans most likely interpreted these gifted material goods as a token of gratitude for the allotted space. And if there was an understanding of exchanging the missionaries' goods for land, then it was most probable that the 'fee' was for the temporal use of the land. Yet as noted in the above minute, the missionaries maintained this worldview of land being an 'asset,' 'private property,' and 'trading commodity.'

As noted in Chapter 1, Turner records that there was much excitement and enthusiasm from various *nu'u* regarding the institution:

> When we were in search for a site on which to erect our own institution premises, the chiefs and people in various places were so anxious to have us in their neighbourhood, that they offered us, free of any charge, as much land as we pleased. "Here is our village," said a chief, "just say the word, and we shall all clear off to another place, and let you have the entire settlement."[156]

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[155] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, 21 March 1844."

[156] Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia,* 128.

Missionaries and teachers had a set station in which they operated from. This was also their *nu'u* or residency. Much of their efforts including their Sabbath worship and schools were based in the *nu'u* or residency. However, as much as possible, they would travel to the neighboring *nu'u* to conduct visits with the LMS converts and provide their services as usual. There was a dire need for teachers and missionaries. And most *nu'u* in Samoa patiently awaited the time they would be granted one.

This is important to note because the enthusiasm that Turner recalls did not happen in a vacuum. The reported excitement also has to do with the people realizing that they could possibly be hosting Turner and the LMS, therefore not having to commute to the nearest station. From a cultural standpoint, the excitement is from the assumption that the mission is acknowledging the autonomy of *nu'u.* The phrase "so anxious to have us in their neighborhood" is not an exaggeration. In the earlier decade of the LMS in Samoa, this was the reality for the teachers. *Matai* sent *āiga* members to Sapapali'i to request a visit or to request a teacher, and this is exactly what Turner witnessed in his search for land.

Samoans associated having a resident white missionary with a sense of status. And being that missionaries were few in numbers in the first two decades of LMS labor in Samoa, the missionaries were generally received with great hospitality. Samoans were familiarized with the concept of school – a central location to meet and learn – by the 1840's because of the missionary and teachers work. The mission stations served this purpose, and the occasional visits of the missionaries and teachers to the out-stations meant 'school' was coming to the neighboring *nu'u.* The soft introduction of specialized schools was also happening in this time. Ebenezer Buchanan initiated the Infant Model School at his station at Falealili, a school dedicated to train "infant school teachers."[157] Like the mission-stations, the function of this school required the commuting of students to this particular station for this cause.

This was how Samoans understood school institutions as presented by the missionaries in their dealings with the locals. Unavoidably, *nu'u* that had a resident missionary also had the most access to 'school.' For Samoans in the context of 1844, hosting a missionary then meant they too had a 'school,' affording them priority in access to the missionary's knowledge. Turner notes "when we were in search for a site to erect our own institution premises" as the antecedent to the

[157] Lonise Tanielu, "O le A'oa'oina o le Gagana, Faitautusi, ma le Tusitusi i le A'oga a le Faifeau: Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS)," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Auckland, 2004), 143.

people's excitement, implying that the opportunity to host "institution premises" was the cause for the enthusiastic offering of land. However, the idea of an "institutional premises," a school campus – which consists of school buildings with classrooms, dormitories for residency of students and housing for teachers, spaces designated for extracurricular activities - was never seen, heard, or experienced by Samoans before 1844.

Before the concept of education confined to a location and building was introduced by the erection of chapels and the first 'school' in Sapapali'i, Samoans had a worldview that can be summed up as " '*O aoga a mea uma*,' meaning 'education is everywhere.'"[158] Their learning was not confined to a place like 'school.' Every task in the day-to-day lives of a Samoan was a learning opportunity. However, 1830 changed this understanding, and in the fourteen years of the mission, the Samoans adapted as evident in their commuting to the mission-stations. By 1844, *matai* and *āiga* gifted lands to erect chapels and dwelling houses, but the land belonged to *āiga* and *nu'u*. However, the establishment of such institution in Samoa was basically the establishment of a whole new *nu'u.*

The mission had facilities on lands gifted by *matai* in Sapapali'i and Fasitootai, both *nu'u* originally considered by the missionaries for the establishment of this new campus. However, they opted to choose a different location for their institution:

> *Sa faaletonu faifeau pe faatuina le a'oga i Sapapalii poo Fasitootai. Sa fai la latou fono i Fasitoouta, ona savavali lea o Faifeau i le ala e oo i Sagana e filifili se laueleele e tu ai le ā'oga. Ua latou manatu ua silisili i Malua i aai uma.* [159]
>
> Translation:
>
> The missionaries were indecisive whether to establish the school at Sapapalii or Fasitootai. They had a meeting at Fasitoouta, then they walked to Sagana to choose a land to establish the school. They believed Malua was the best of all the settlements.[160]

[158] Clarke Stowers, "Historical Mamanu," 36.

[159] *O Le Sulu Samoa,* Aokuso 1930.

[160] English translation provided by author.

In their journey from Fasitoouta to Sagana, the missionaries crossed the boundary of the *ītūmālō* of A'ana and entered the territory of Tuamasaga, the border being between Saleimoa and Faleasiu.[161] Despite the offers of various *nu'u* to host whatever project the LMS intended for, Turner declined:

> We did not, however, wish to disturb people in that way, or to take a grant of land open to subsequent disputes, and so we fixed on a spot on the coast – quite a bush, and away from any settlement which we could easily purchase and secure as mission property.[162]

Turner's attitude about avoiding the disturbance in the relocation of people hints to the enormity of the project that the LMS had in mind. Had Turner accepted the 'free' land offers, the space required for the SDC's vision to be brought to life is considerably large and would also require the exaggerated 'disturbance' of people. Furthermore, Turner notes that the people offered to clear an 'entire settlement.' Although this is an exaggeration, but the mention of such a thought is linked to the SDC's vision for the institution, it is an 'entire settlement' in and of itself.

The concern for 'subsequent disputes' and the intention to 'purchase and secure as mission property' points to Turner and the mission's understanding of land as 'private property.' This further implies that the vision of the SDC was to own exclusive spaces in Samoa. The success of the mission and having a strong foothold on the islands also meant having a catalogue of real estate. From the Samoan framework, the 'institution premises' is basically a *nu'u.* It is a settlement, exclusively belonging to the LMS, and 'secured' for the future needs of the LMS.

In describing the land desired by the mission as "quite a bush, and away from any settlement," Turner notes two influences in their decision to "purchase" Malua. Firstly, 'quite a bush' implies that the land is uncultivated and unoccupied. From Turner and the SDC's standpoint, such a land could be "easily purchase(d)" due to the inactivity in the lands, implying that it has no use to the people.

Secondly, being 'away from any settlement' places a significance on the location as being a 'neutral zone.' In the previous years, A'ana was subject to much destruction at the hands of

[161] Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'asāmoa," 230.

[162] Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia,* 128.

Malietoa and his allies from Manono. And Malietoa's relocation from Sapapali'i to Malie, one of the political centers of Tuamasaga, should've given the missionaries insight that A'ana and Tuamasaga, both important *ītūmālō*, have a rather complex history of tension.

The intent of Turner's reference to Malua as 'quite a bush' serves the purpose of implying that the land was unoccupied, uncultivated, and therefore not of use. But with the LMS being only fourteen years into the mission at this point, the 'lack of use' can be explained as a symbol of old customs and beliefs having a hold on the converts. *Matai* and *fono* instituted and enforced the placing of *sā* on lands believed to be occupied by their deities. Such *sā* were honored and respected by *āiga* and *nu'u* that intentionally avoided entering these spaces for fear of upsetting the deities. Consequently, bushland such as the one noted by Turner, existed near the coast. Malua is arguably an example of such land with strict *sā*. Recalling the views of the people of Saleimoa regarding the land and Malua prior to the institution, Seu – one of Malua's first set of students – stated during the fiftieth anniversary of the seminary in 1894:

> *Afai e o mai tagata Saleimoa latou te fia ave feau i Utualii, latou te ui atu lava i le sami, ona o lo latou mata'u.*[163]
>
> Translation:
> If people from Saleimoa desired to send messages to Utualii, they would detour to the sea because of their fear(s).[164]

The reverence the Saleimoa people had for Malua before the institution is indicative of the land being a sacred space to the people. Seu's account specifies that this was the practice of the people of Saleimoa, and since Malua is in Saleimoa, the land being 'quite a bush' is justifiable. The intentional avoidance of Malua was due to the belief that "*aitu"* and "*sauali'i"* also resided there. It was therefore sacred, and the *fono* of Saleimoa is the institution that placed and enforced a *sā* on these lands. An LMS representative was first assigned to Saleimoa in 1835; therefore, Malua being overran by a "veritable forest" with "trees being of broad girth and great length" in

[163] *O Le Sulu Samoa,* Tesema 1894.

[164] English translation provided by author.

1844 are signs of the retention of old beliefs despite Christianity being present in the *nu'u* for nine years at this point.

2.2.3 Saleimoa and the LMS

The teacher Tereauore was assigned to station at Saleimoa in 1835. The placement of Tereauore was a part of the decision to assign the teachers throughout Malietoa's network of connections. Saleimoa was near Malietoa's *nu'u* Sagana, situated within the *ītūmālō* of Tuamasaga. Malietoa's residence was specifically in Malie of Sagana, one of the 'political centers' of Tuamasaga. In relation to Sagana, Saleimoa is the first line of defense for Tuamasaga since the next *nu'u* over is a part of the A'ana *ītūmālō.*

Tereauore's early success at his station is evident in the selection of Mose, one of the students of the Saleimoa station, for the mission led by John Williams to the New Hebrides in 1839. Worship was conducted in Saleimoa before the mission departed, and in the ceremony, Mose was the only Samoan reported to have a role, which was the delivering of a sermon.[165] His participation can be accredited to the success of Tereauore's teachings, but it is probable that Williams and missionaries granted him the honor as the representative of "Aiga, le Faletolu, Luatua and Gautaala," the *fono* of Mose's *nu'u.*[166] Present at the service was Malietoa himself, witnessing the departure of the first Samoan missionaries. His presence can also be credited to his support for the mission as well as the representative of his *nu'u,* Laloagi Samoanamao.[167] But the fact that he was present on the lands of Saleimoa is testament to the relationship he shared with that respective *fono.*

The evangelization of the people of Saleimoa was evident leading up to the seminary. Even a year after the establishment of the school, the SDC was elated about their observation:

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[165] *O Le Sulu Samoa,* (no. II vol I, 1839): "O loo fai le faamavaega, ua faitau le afioga a le Atua, ma fai le tatalo e Misi Milo; ona lauga lea Misi Ale ma Misi Ite; o Williamu foi, ma Mose le Saleeimoa; o le tatalo e Misi Matono, ua i'u ai. Translation: A farewell was conducted, the word of God was read, prayers were conducted by M Miller; then sermons delivered by M Charles and M Heat; as well as Williams and Mose the Saleimoa; prayers by M Maconald, then it ended).

[166] Latai, "Covenant Keepers," 94. See also, Oka Fauolo, "Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i," 69.

[167] Fauolo, "Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i," 69.

> In the district of Malua many are seeking admission to the church, and the great body of the people are under regular instruction. The plan of labour is so arranged that every person in the district may hear the word of God at least once every Sabbath.[168]

The impact of Tereauore's labors and the sign of a "great body of the people…under regular instruction" asserts the position of Saleimoa as another LMS stronghold. Prior to the establishment of the seminary, Saleimoa was a main contributor to the annual *Mē* gatherings, a sort of district assembly for the congregations of the LMS, where worship is conducted, and much extravaganza is placed on donating to the mission. Interestingly, the missionaries had Saleimoa grouped with the *nu'u* of Faleasiu and Leulumoega, *nu'u* members of the A'ana ī*tūm*ālō. Nevertheless, leading up to the establishment of the seminary, the people of Saleimoa were familiar with offering and gifting personal property to the cause of the mission through this annual donation cycle.[169] Tereauore and the LMS's influence on Saleimoa led the people of Saleimoa to offer the *faletele* on the *nu'u's malae* as a place of worship and meetings for the LMS.[170] And it is on that same location that the current CCCS church building stands on in Salepoua'e.[171]

Evidently, it is safe to conclude that the people of Saleimoa, including the original owners of Malua, were well acquainted with the purpose and intent of the LMS mission. The enthusiasm described by Turner from people who volunteered their lands for the Mission was also the emotions of Matiu and the *matai of* Saleimoa. Furthermore, the desire of the LMS to use land that was once under a *sā* is a cause of celebration for the *nu'u.* Firstly, it reflects a coming of age in the new faith. One of the symptoms that there was a retention of old customs and beliefs is reflected in the 'bush' that the missionaries found on Malua. And secondly, the Mission's occupation of the former *sā* land means the "taboo is removed," making the land "common."[172] From a Samoan lens, the inaccessibility of the land based on customary beliefs was now shattered, and the teachings of

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[168] The Report of the Directors to the Fifty-Second General Meeting of the Missionary Society (London: W. M'Dowall, 1846), 41. "District" as used in this context most likely refers to the *nu'u* within the immediate vicinity of the seminary, meaning Saleimoa.

[169] *O Le Sulu Samoa,* May 1844.

[170] Navy Luatua, "A History of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS) at Saliemoa: Tracing Origins from 1836 – 1939," (BTh thesis, Malua Theological College, 2021), 24.

[171] Luatua, "A History of the CCCS at Saleimoa," 24.

[172] Olson, "Re-Constructing Landscapes," 22.

Tereauore and the missioanries was valid. The deities of the past that roamed Malua were now subject to the authority of the Christian God.

2.2.4 *Igagatō* – The Gifting of Malua

Reminiscing on the meeting with the *matai* and people of Saleimoa in the original 'transaction,' Turner wrote:

> We called together the owners of the land, marked off about twenty-five acres, and paid for it in calico and hardware.[173]

Much has been stated about the contrasting views of Samoans and Europeans regarding land and its inalienability. However, attention must be drawn to the meeting of the "owners of the land." This is a subtle recognition by Turner and the LMS that even land that is 'quite a bush,' unoccupied and uncultivated, have a traditional owner(s). In the March 1845 issue of the *Samoan Reporter,* Turner identified the people as *matai:*

> In pursuance of a resolution passed at the adjourned general meeting of the Mission on March 21, 1844, we purchased a piece of ground, of about 30 acres at Malua, N. W. side of Upolu, district of Saleimoa, on which to carry on the operations of the Samoan Mission Seminary. We paid the five chiefs to whom it belonged in cloth, hatchets, &c, value £12 16 7. cost price.[174]

Turner identified that five *matai* were present at the time of the deal, one of them being the *matai* Matiu – *matai* of the *āiga* that owns the land - from Utuali'i, a *pitonu'u* (sub-village) of Saleimoa.[175] Their presence and the use of the phrase "marked off" indicates that there was mutual understanding on the boundaries set for this project. Despite the slight difference in acreage between Turner's personal account from 1861 and his joint report with Charles Hardie 1845, the

[173] Turner, Nineteen Years in Polynesia, 128.

[174] *Samoan Reporter*, March 1845, 2.

[175] Enari, "A Christian Reflection on the Customary Land Tenure System," 66.

main idea presented is that boundaries were both set and agreed upon by both parties. The understanding of the boundaries was also noted by Meisake, a part of the first class of students in the Malua seminary, who stated during the commemoration of Malua's fiftieth anniversary:

O le igoa o Malua ua gata lava i le tolotolo ua i ai alii faifeau…[176]

Translation:

The (land) name Malua ends at the headland/downhill slope where the ministers are..[177]

The sheer size of 25 to 30 acres is a sign to the *matai* of Saleimoa that the Mission was going to commence a grand project. Prior to 1844, lands gifted by Samoans to the LMS were parcels that had enough space for a facility, whether it be a house or a chapel. And considering both were already present in Saleimoa by 1844, Matiu and his fellow *matai* were already familiar with the lands occupied by the Mission. Therefore, the sight of the boundaries in place made known that what Turner and the SDC were about to commence was more than just a facility. It was a settlement, a *nu'u.*

Matiu and Saleimoa were already familiar with the concept of school, having experienced such a system with the presence of Tereauore. They had also seen the mission dwelling in Saleimoa erected for Tereauore. And most likely noted the chapels and dwellings throughout Tuamasaga. But the idea of a campus where people from various *nu'u* would become long-term residences in a single *nu'u* was unheard of. A singular space allocated to the LMS for dwelling, school, worship, and even subsistence crop farming, was basically the vision of a new *nu'u.*

Despite the inability of the Samoan to grasp the concept that was about to be introduced by Turner and the SDC, the land was decidedly granted to the LMS. And from the evidence presented thus far, and the approval of a land of that size, is enough to suggest that Matiu and the *matai* of Saleimoa granted the land to the LMS, simply because they were the LMS. It was an act of setting a permanent place for the LMS within their *nu'u.* Further supporting this apportioning of land to the Mission on the count of gifting it because of who they are, Turner wrote:

[176] *O Le Sulu Samoa*, Tesema 1894.

[177] English translation provided by author.

Subsequently, as our numbers increased, we added twenty-five acres more.[178]

The practice of incorporating a new *matai* into a *nu'u* is only possible with a *tulaga maota* and a place in the hierarchy of the *nu'u* requires the consensus of the *fono.* In the case of Malua, Turner notes that there were five *matai* present, possibly representatives of the *fono,* including Matiu as representative of the *āiga* that owns the land of Malua. Analyzing Turner and the LMS from a Samoan perspective, for Matiu and Saleimoa, Turner and the missionaries are metaphorically the *matai* belonging to the LMS ā*iga.*

The rank of the new *matai* within the *nu'u* hierarchy is a matter of much serious deliberation. But in the case of the LMS in Saleimoa, their rank in the hierarchy was already decided. The religious landscape of Saleimoa, as with the rest of Samoa, was transforming. For Saleimoa, Christianity had already taken root in the *nu'u* since 1835, and the willingness of Matiu and the *matai* to host the missionaries on their land is a sign of this as well. Furthermore, the gifting of Malua to the LMS has deep theological undertone as described in the last section. It is a place of high regards in the indigenous beliefs of Saleimoa, a sacred ground where their deities of their former religion resided. Yet this is the space that they willingly gifted to the mission as their new *tulaga maota.*

This customary means of transferring land is official, and the unspoken agreement in place is that the recipients of the gift now "accept the authority and the common identity of the *āiga* and *nu'u* who bestowed it."[179] This is symbolically realized upon the gift recipient reciprocating a customary gift to the *nu''u* called an "*o'o.''* Pratt translates "*o'o*" as "to arrive at," or "to reach."[180] In the custom of Samoan gifting, an *o'o* is performed when a *matai* is first bestowed the title and enters/ "arrives" / "reaches" their first council in the *fono.* As a token of gratitude for the *fono's* welcome, the *matai* and his *āiga* feed the *fono* and the *nu'u,* preparing a feast for such a momentous occasion. Furthermore, the *matai* and *āiga* offer tributes such as fine mats and food items to the *fono.* It reflects gratitude to the *nu'u* and serves as a symbol of the new *matai's* commitment to

[178] Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, 128.

[179] Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 71.

[180] Pratt, *Samoan Dictionary,* 91.

feed, care, and serve the *nu'u.* It is also a subtle gesture to let the *nu'u* know that the new *matai* and *āiga* have arrived.

Turner boasts about the economic bargain that he was able to make in his acquisition of Malua. He noted having 'purchased' the first twenty-five acres with "calico and hardware."[181] He further elaborated by stating that the SDC "paid the five chiefs to whom it belonged in cloth, hatches &c, value £12 16 7. cost price."[182] The target audience of the Samoa Reporter and Turner's book are most likely under the impression that the LMS SDC received a desirable deal in their acquiring of 'private property.' However, for Matiu and the five *matai,* this was simply the missionaries *o'o* on behalf of the LMS. The Mission was appointed and converged into the *nu'u.* They now had a permanent place in Saleimoa. The people of Saleimoa already knew the LMS had a presence in most *nu'u* at this point, but Malua was now, at least in the eyes of Saleimoa, the permanent *tulaga maota* of the missionaries and the LMS.

2.2.5 *Igagatō* – A Permanent Gift

George Turner and Charles Hardie relocated to the new *tulaga maota* of the LMS in August of 1844, and on September 25th, 1844, instruction commenced.[183] The people of the *nu'u* of Saleimoa maintained a close relationship with the LMS, providing service as needed by the missionaries. George Turner erected two stone houses for the missionaries dwelling on the campus.[184] And the laborers on this project came from the "adjacent villages," most likely referring to the people within the various *pitonu'u* of Saleimoa.[185]

Such assistance from the *aumaga* shows the value that Saleimoa placed on their relationship with their new neighbor. The erection of Turner and Hardie's residential houses required manpower. And fortunately for the students, the labor was provided by the *aumaga* of Saleimoa. Such services were rendered to the *fono and* were also rendered to *matai.* But Turner's

[181] Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*," 128.

[182] *Samoan Reporter*, March 1845, 2.

[183] *Samoan Reporter*, March 1845, 2.

[184] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, 17th & 18th November 1847."

[185] Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, 129.

ability to access this service speaks volume to the views of Saleimoa regarding the LMS. Had the LMS not incorporated subsistence farming into the core practices of the institution, the Saleimoa *aumaga* would've likely catered to the Mission with the provision of food as well.

The love was reciprocated by the LMS, as the "two brethren who reside there," Turner and Hardie, were "enabled to supply the whole of their preaching stations, every Sabbath-day."[186] This reciprocal relationship, at least for the Saleimoa people, is culturally significant in that it shows the active participation of the LMS in their *nu'u* affairs. The LMS' placement in Malua meant that the people had immediate access to the Gospel. And Turner and the missionaries that would follow were able to provide Saleimoa with consistency in their Sabbath practices.

Beyond the reciprocated services, the missionaries that had immediate oversight over the functions of the LMS in Saleimoa were the resident missionaries at Malua. Therefore, the potential candidates for the Samoan seminary from the Saleimoa station would have had access to direct insight from the missionaries regarding their preparations for the seminary. Some of Saleimoa's very own benefited from such access. This is perhaps how Matiu Pomare, a *suli* of the Matiu *āiga*, was able to get a foot in at the Seminary in 1855.[187]

Samoa's lack of a central government meant a lack for a credible authority to enforce any European claims to Samoan lands. Therefore, the foreigners in Samoa desired a central government: the missionaries' motive was the desire for "peace" whereas the settlers "wanted a central Samoan authority with whom they could deal."[188] With the presence and influence of foreign governments and entities in Samoa, the 1870's was a period when Samoans also recognized that a united front was necessary to deal with foreigners. This led to a compromise and the establishment of the "*Fono a Taimua* ("council of the front line") representing the major districts and a *Fono a Faipule* (council of law-makers) representing the sub-districts."[189] At the head of the government was Malietoa Laupepa, a graduate of the Samoan Seminary at Malua and the grandson of Malietoa Vaiinupo. Unfortunately for Europeans, this united front decided that

[186] *Samoan Reporter*, March 1845, 3.

[187] *O Le Sulu Samoa*, Tesema 1894.

[188] Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 81.

[189] Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 81.

"all unproven land claims – these being the majority of claims – should immediately be dismissed."[190]

In March of 1874, George Turner and Henry Nisbet represented the LMS as Pula of Saleimoa and Matiu Pomare of Utualii battled before the Ta'imua court. Pula had looked to 'reclaim' the lands of Tofuola and Utualii on which the Malua grounds occupied. The issue at-hand was the validity of the 'purchase' of the Malua land. The court favored the evidence provided by Matiu's witnesses, and consequently, the court prohibited Pula from ever claiming the land, unanimously deciding that the land belonged to the Mission, ultimately favoring Matiu's support of the LMS' claim of land ownership.[191]

The *Taimua* and *Faipule* government held a favorable bias for Samoan land rights. But in the case of dispute between two Samoans regarding customary land gifted to a European, in this case a European entity, a decision could've been made in favor of either party. However, based on the location of the land within the authoritative boundaries of the Matiu *āiga*, the most credible source then is the descendant of the Sā Matiu. The role of Matiu in the challenge indicates an inter-generational understanding of the terms and conditions of the *igagatō* gifted to the LMS. The *āiga's* rights and authorities to the land of Tofuola and Utualii had been forfeited. In a customary sense, the land belonged to a new *matai* (missionaries) and a new *āiga* (LMS). Therefore, Matiu's case was a confirmation that the land was indeed gifted with the understanding that it was permanently granted to the Mission and its successors.

Despite the decision from the case above, all European claims to land were once again subject to disputes after the 1889 Berlin Act came into effect in Samoa. By then, the concept of alienation was understood by Samoans, especially those who unfortunately lost their lands when 'sales' that were recorded during Samoa's civil war years were deemed valid by the 'big three' foreign powers. The new law required the submission of European claims to land as the group that had oversight investigated evidence of these claims. This meant that even after Matiu defended the *igagatō* gifted to the LMS, they once again had to submit their claim to Malua. The LMS was vocal about their Samoan constituency being involved with the process, encouraging the people to

[190] Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 82.

[191] EFKS Ofisa o Fanua ma Fale, *Pula v. Matiu, 17 Mati 1874.*

prioritize making time to meet with the settlement officers to protect their customary land through their *Sulu Samoa* magazine:

> *O le a foi mai i Samoa nei le Alii Suefanua Amerika…A papai mai le Alii ona vave faia lea e Suefanua o suega o fanua uma i Samoa…Ua faapea le faatonuga o Alii Konesula o Malo Tetele i Alii suefanua. "Ia suesue i le fia taofia e papalagi i le eleele i Samoa…Afai e le papai mai alii Samoa i le fale o le suega i le aso ua atofa ai o suefanua mo le suega, aua le nofo faatalitali mo alii Samoa ua fia fai lave a e faia pea le suega ma vave maua le i'uga." O le mea sili ona tatau ia te outou alii Samoa e fia fai lave i ia suega o le a fai ina ia vave oo mai i Apia ma outou molimau ina ia faamatala atu i le suefanua mo Samoa le uiga o lo outou lave…Talati,*[192]
>
> Translation:
> The American settlement officer will return to Samoa…When he arrives the settlement officer will immediately investigate all Samoan land…The Consuls of the Foreign Powers have instructed the settlement officer (to) "Investigate all lands claimed by Whites in Samoa…If the Samoans do not come to the office of the investigation on the days allotted for the investigation of land, do not wait for the Samoans who want to challenge the investigation but continue the investigation and hastily come to a decision." This is of utmost importance for you Samoans who wish to challenge the pending investigations so quickly come to Apia with your evidence to explain to the settlement officer the reason for your challenge…(signed) Clarke.[193]

Whether or not the LMS intended for the people to also consider their lands claimed by the LMS isn't clear. But the fact that the LMS used its media platform to inform their followers of such a significant occasion hint to the concern that the missionaries had for Samoans and the protection of their land. Ironically, the LMS was also among the foreign entities in the race to

[192] *O Le Sulu Samoa*, Aokuso 1894, 16.

[193] English translation provided by author.

secure the Mission's land estates. In February of 1893, the *Samoan Weekly Herald* published an update on the Commissioners land investigations on which the following excerpt was taken:

> The London Mission claims to their college and training institution sites were not disputed, and have been confirmed.[194]

Fifty years since the establishment of the seminary, the Matiu *āiga* and the *nu'u* of Saleimoa honored the *igagatō* granted to the LMS. The Malua landscape also underwent various changes during the first fifty years of Mission presence: the building of houses, the rebuilding of houses; the shifting of dwelling locations and the rearrangement of facilities; shifting cultivation within the boundaries of the fifty acres. These were all components of the mission institution operations. Yet the Mission experienced an autonomy in their operations on the land and were at liberty to do as they felt necessary. This is a complete contrast to the examples of *matū palapala,* where land was gifted for a specified reason, and therefore it could only be used for that singular purpose. To do otherwise would require the consent of *āiga* and/or *fono.*

In the changing of Malua's physical landscape, another important thing happened. Malua had a burial ground. The location Samoans buried their dead signifies this sense community, even after life. It is an acknowledgment that although the person is gone, he/she is forever linked to the *matai* and *āiga* since they are buried among the land, usually within the vicinity of a *fale tele* or *tulaga maota.* The existence of burial grounds on land also signifies a sense of the *āiga*'s permanent authority over the land. Had Matiu and the *nu'u* of Saleimoa intended for the land to be of temporary use, the LMS would have had to seek permission for the burying of their dead in Malua. However, since 1844, the LMS buried "George Stallworthy, Mrs. Drummond, Penny Hardie, the infant Children of Nisbet and Ella," and Samoan children and "other connected with the Institution" on the premises, and they were uninterrupted by the original owners of the land.[195]

Within this fifty-year time frame, Matiu and the *matai* of Saleimoa did not interfere in any Mission activity conducted on the land gifted to the LMS. Turner and Hardie both left the institution to conduct other Mission business and that also did not constitute a forfeiture of their

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[194] *Samoa Weekly Herald,* vol. 1, issue 13, (18 February 1893): 2

[195] Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, 136.

ownership of the land. Matiu even confirmed the authority of Malua as being vested in the missionaries and the LMS, the new *matai* and *āiga,* when a fellow *matai* tried to dispute such an agreement. These activities and Matiu's confirmation signify that there was no specific terms and conditions attached to the land usage. Therefore, the most reasonable understanding of the gifted land is that it was a *igagatō,* meant to pass on to the successors of the LMS mission permanently.

2.2.6 *Igagatō* in the Context of War

The unavoidable reality of war is indiscriminate destruction. Sporadic warfare was a common trend between 1840 and 1851.[196] And considering the autonomy of the Samoan *nu'u,* the allyship that was available through the *ītūmālō*, and the complexities of Samoan genealogical kinship, a partnership forged through a common enemy could happen on one occasion, and that same partnership could end in bloodshed in the next. The missionaries had to navigate these rather unique networks of relationships to build rapport with high-ranking *matai* to stop the violence before it ensued.

The Mission had a presence throughout Samoa, with *āiga* in *nu'u* having allocated land for the erection of their facilities. However, their 'properties' – that is, their houses, buildings, and material goods – were generally considered by Samoans as belonging to whoever the landowners were. With war always lingering in the nearby neighborhoods, the missionaries had to adjust to this concerning reality. This meant intently building rapport with *matai, āiga,* and *nu'u,* and therefore trying to get the warring factions to understand the concept of 'mission property.' This is explicitly mentioned as a resolution in a meeting when the SDC deliberated over a fine sanctioned by Captain Worth and Consul Pritchard on Manono after the destruction of the Leulumoega chapel:

> The procedure of the brethren on the spot, who, hearing of the injurious influence which the said fine was exerting upon the minds of some of the people and after consulting the majority of the brethren, intimated to M Consul Pritchard that we could not see it our duty to receive the fine, and recommend that he return it to the natives stating our reasons for

[196] Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 69.

> wishing this to be done, and at the same time showing them the necessity of being more careful for the future, and ever regarding as sacred mission property of every kind.[197]

Samoans could 'regard' property, land, the cosmos, and even other *matai* sacred. But what is sacred varies from *nu'u* to *nu'u.* The autonomy of a *nu'u* meant that the *fono* could sanction and enforce a *sā* on what is deemed 'sacred,' but the power of that *sā* only applies within the *nu'u.* Therefore, what is 'sacred' in Palauli may not be 'sacred' in Fa'asaleleaga, so forth and so on. The Malua grounds were 'sacred' to the Matiu *āiga* and the people of Saleimoa, but if it were accessible to the neighboring *nu'u,* the bush could've been nothing more than good pigeon snaring grounds.

The destruction of the chapel in Leulumoega and the missionary house in Palauli (discussed in the next chapter) does not stem from an inability to deem 'property' sacred. Instead, the destruction of those 'properties' has everything to do with the understanding of who the land belongs to. Those facilities stood on *matū palapala;* therefore, from the lens of the warriors, these facilities ultimately belonged to the rival *nu'u.* Fa'asaleleaga and Manono had a mission station, dwelling house, chapels and missionaries/teachers in their *ītūmālō*, but they understood these facilities and people as being temporarily allowed to exist on their land. This concept was somewhat beginning to make sense to the missionaries in 1849. In a Samoan Reporter article discussing the war between Manono and A'ana, the author of the entry wrote:

> To such a people, also, the Missionary is a source of wonder…At the same time, too, his ignorance of the language of the people proves a formidable barrier in the way, so that he is unable to enter into explanations which might tend to remove prejudice and misconception… But supposing that the Missionary has, in some degree obtained favour with the tribe among whom he is located, the disjointed state of society existing among the inhabitants exposes him to difficulties and dangers…When war does break out, the Missionary is, perhaps, regarded by the opposing tribe as identified with those among whom he dwells; and is, consequently, exposed to all the hazards and dangers of the

[197] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, 3rd 4th & 6th December 1848."

war…and this may be the case till he has succeeded in impressing upon them the assurance, that he is equally the friend of all.[198]

Although the missionaries were generally not the target of warring factions, the concept of *nu'u* and *ītūmālō* and destroying enemy land during war was finally making sense to them. This potential danger to the missionary as described in the article is most applicable to their supposed 'private property.' Samoans could distinguish the missionaries/teachers from their enemies, but they could not draw the distinction between enemy and land. Their enemies have a *fa'asinomaga,* and therefore the destruction of that inheritance is a no-brainer in times of war. Even if it means the destruction of 'mission property,' because that 'property' is not isolated – it occupies space, and that designated space belongs to *matai* and *āiga* and/or *nu'u* and *fono.*

The vision for the 'mission-station strategy' was to create a sort of permanent settlement, symbolizing the breaking away of a people – that is, from a theological standpoint, to be set apart for God. However, the autonomy of *nu'u* made this impossible. The lands gifted to the Mission in individual *nu'u* belonged to a *matai* and an *āiga* and was under the jurisdiction of a *fono* and *nu'u.* Therefore, a commuting student views a scenario of residency at the station as a submission to the supremacy and authority of that *nu'u.* This is why the mission-station strategy was eventually abandoned.

However, the way that the SDC described the vision of and what constitutes a seminary was framed in such a way to imply that the seminary at Malua was a *nu'u* in and of itself:

…o le a saunia e i laua, o Misi Tana ma Misi Ale, se aoga tele e popoto ai Samoa….Sei faamatalaina atu le uiga o le aoga a faia nei i Malua. E le aoga na o Saleimoa poo Aana, a o le aoga e lelei ai Samoa uma…o le tasi fanua tele Saleimoa e fai ai fale ma maumaga ma isi sauniga o le aoga [199]

Translation:

[198] Samoan Reporter, November 1849: 3

[199] *O Le Sulu Samoa*, Iulai 1844.

> Turner and Charles will prepare a big school to educate Samoa…The purpose for the school at Malua will be explained…The school is not exclusively for Saleimoa or Aana, but it is good for all of Samoa…On one big parcel of land, there will be houses and plantations and other extracurriculars for the school.[200]

From the onset, the vision of Malua as shared in the Samoan language resonates with the concept of a new *nu'u.* The framing of the article can be viewed as an attempt to raising awareness about this new concept and introducing Malua as a *nu'u* in and of itself, a concept made possible by Matiu and Saleimoa's *igagatō*. Whether this was the real motive behind the framing of the message or not, the announcement naturally resonates with the idea of establishing a *nu'u* with its own *fa'alupega,* therefore showing the land as being under the jurisdiction of the LMS itself. Turner and Chrarles are immediately identified as the heads of the *nu'u,* possessing the ability to educate. The specific mention of the school as "not exclusively" for a *nu'u* is further emphasizing the autonomy of this new *nu'u.* And the announcement of the building of 'houses' and the cultivation of 'plantations' further drills the idea of a new *nu'u* to the audience. The allocation of land for housing and food was the responsibility of the *matai* and/or *fono.* Only this time, the *matai* is clearly Turner and Charles, and the *fono* is the LMS. Therefore, the jurisdiction and governing body of this land is the Mission.

Fear lingered in Malua, at least for the missionaries, when the Manono and A'ana war ensued. The establishment of the institution correlated with the time frame of the war, and the destruction of LMS chapels and dwellings in the various *nu'u* led to a bit of insecurity for the Mission:

> We feared lest some lawless chief, seeking revenge on account of a parent or child or friend lost in battle, should, in accordance with heathen custom, either openly or stealthily enter our premises and take the lives of some of the students related to his enemy.[201]

However, Turner and Hardie were elated to report:

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[200] English translation provided by author.

[201] *Samoan Reporter*, November 1849, 4.

> It is with feelings of no ordinary joy and gratitude, therefore, we have to report, that, during one of the most destructive wars Samoa ever saw, our Institution has hitherto stood the blast.[202]

The warring parties "were in the neighborhood" from time to time up to the truce in 1851. But observation of the boundaries distinctly separating Malua from the neighboring *matai*; the layout of the facilities; the diverse people from various *nu'u* and *ītūmālō* living together under the jurisdiction of the missionaries solely*;* the plantations within the vicinities implying a self-sustaining community; and diverse usage of the land - are all signs that point to the disassociating of this specific land and its current occupants from the *matai* and *āiga* who originally owned it. The land was under a new *matai* and *āiga,* and observation of the points above are evidence that the new authority of the land is also autonomous. It was without a shadow of a doubt, Matiu and Saleimoa relinquished the rights to these lands, and as far as any rivals of Saleimoa and Tuamasaga would be concerned, the permanence is the clear boundaries and the presence of the new owners.

2.3 Summary

Igagatō is a matter of 'converging and appointing' a *matai* and *āiga* into a permanent space within *nu'u* dynamics. It is a symbol of accepting an outsider into the circle of fellowship. All land in Samoa has a designated custodian, whose responsibility is to ensure that the lands are preserved, and therefore able to be passed down to the future generations. Therefore, to transfer a piece of *āiga* inheritance to the permanent authority of an 'outsider' is not a matter to be taken lightly. Land is what ties the Samoan to the history of their people, *matai, āiga, nu'u* and *ītūmālō.* Therefore, this is what the *āiga* and *nu'u s*acrifices when they relinquish their rights to the land to welcome someone into the circle of fellowship. In the case of the Matiu *āiga* and those of Saleimoa with ties to Malua and Tofuola, their ties to Saleimoa remain intact as the lands offered to the LMS was only a portion of their inheritance. However, this portion now under the authority of the LMS, is a means of asserting the LMS's permanent place within their community.

[202] *Samoan Reporter*, November 1849, 4.

This is why this type of land gifting is rare, hence the one case study of this chapter, and of the highest of honors. The theological implication is that if land is life, then a major sacrifice to the Mission has been made. But it is not a sacrifice that is exclusive only to one *matai* and *āiga.* The converging and appointing of the LMS into this permanent space can only be done with the consensus of a *nu'u,* because the power dynamics of the *nu'u* are affected by the decision.

We see in Matiu and Saleimoa's offering of an indigenous sacred ground to the Mission the reverence that the people had for the LMS. Land that was *sā,* even years into the Mission's progress in Saleimoa, was only opened for the Mission. Not only did Saleimoa appoint and converge the LMS into the circle of fellowship, but they granted it the highest honors, in giving it sacred land as its new *tulaga maota.*

The clear and concise boundaries is indicative of another form of *sā* being set into action. The *sā* of crossing boundaries. The LMS land is subject to the authority of its *matai*, the missionaries, and its *āiga*, the LMS. And this is a permanent offer with no terms and conditions attached to it, meaning it is to be passed on to its successors for whatever use they desire. The enforcement of this *sā* relies on the original owners and the *nu'u;* that is, their reminder to the future generations that the *igagatō* is a different piece of land, subject to the authority of the receiver. Successive Matiu's did exactly that, even against claims of their fellow *matai.*

Taking all of this into account, it provides an alternative understanding to the deeds that Mission had. The deed tells us a very European story: land was bought for the mission institute. It undermines the true reverence that Samoans granted to the LMS in its heyday. It ignores the narrative of faithful commitment to the Christian God that can be found from understanding the indigenous Samoan framework. However, relocating and identifying these voices from the margins of data provides us with a more accurate understanding of the sacrifices connected with *igagatō.*

Chapter 3
Land Gifted as *Matū Palapala*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores land gifted to the LMS as *matū palapala*, providing case studies and evidence that suggest the Samoans understanding these lands as *matū palapala*. The lands discussed in this chapter were meant to be a temporal gift to the mission, a common trend in the earliest days of land gifting to the LMS. However, this nature of 'temporal' as discussed in these gifted lands is not a reference to a specific dated period.

The notion of temporal here is three-fold: firstly, temporality in this chapter suggests a logic that "so long as the land is useful to the mission" it shall remain in LMS possession. The automatic assumption would then be if the land is of no use, then it is restored to its original owner.

The second understanding of temporal is the purpose of the gifted land. Samoans allocated land amongst themselves for residence, crop plantation, and other reasons as agreeable within *āiga* and *nu'u.* However, these lands were dedicated for very specific purposes. Therefore, attached to the terms and conditions of *matū palapala* are a specific reason for the use of the gifted land.

Lastly, *matū palapala* reflects the importance of the *matai* and *āiga*, or *nu'u* and *fono.* The temporality from this perspective reflects the authority of these entities in the relocation of a specific type of LMS facility within the premises of one's *āiga* land, or the decision to remove the LMS facility from the land of one *āiga* on to land owned by a different *āiga*. Such decisions are a result of a consensus amongst the *nu'u*, and in other cases as this chapter explores, it reflects level of regard that the Samoan entities have for the LMS. This regard is noted in the moving of the LMS from one land to a land belonging to an *ali'i*, or altogether moving the LMS facilities from one location to the center of the *nu'u*.

These components are characteristics of lands gifted as *matū palapala* in the context of land granted to the LMS. These are the lands explored in this chapter. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the perspective of the missionaries regarding these gifted lands, presenting another possible root for the land disputes happening today in the CCCS.

3.2 *Matū palapala* – Dwelling Houses & Chapels – 1830 to 1835

The goal of first phase of the LMS mission in Samoa was the introduction of Christianity to the islands and building rapport with the islanders with the intent of converting them. The mission was immediately received by Malietoa Vaiinupo, ushering in the era of Christianity in Samoa. Almost immediately, land was granted to the mission for the purpose of erecting chapels and residency for the teachers.

3.2.1 Matāniu feagai ma le Ata

John Williams arrived at the coast of Sapapali'i Savaii along with Charles Barff, and a Samoan couple Fauea and Puaseisei, and 'native' teachers from Tahiti, some of whom had been under the wing of John Williams for ten years, including – Moia, Boti, Toata, Umea, Arue, Taihaere, Rake, and Tuava – on August of 1830.[203] Prior to arriving at Sapapalii, they were greeted by islanders, and upon inquiring of the whereabouts of the *matai* Malietoa, they were informed that he had left Savaii to take part in a war happening in the island of Upolu.[204] Malietoa was made aware of the arrival of these guests, and he returned to Savai'i on the evening of August 21st, 1830. John Williams would depart the vessel, and on the 24th of August 1830, the first official meeting of the LMS and Samoans commenced; a meeting celebrated today by the CCCS as *Taeao o le Talalelei* – 'the Dawn of the Gospel' – a day where the Christian religion was officially introduced to the shores of Samoa.[205]

John Williams - the optimistic missionary that labored in Tahiti known for his infamous saying, "(I) cannot content myself within the narrow limits of a single reef,"[206] – had his sights set on spreading the Gospel and converting islanders throughout the Pacific Islands. The initial step in Samoa was to introduce the new religion to the islands through the labor of the Tahitian

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[203] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams*, 75

[204] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams*, 69.

[205] The meeting between Williams and Malietoa is celebrated in Samoa, specifically for members of the CCCS, as the initial introduction of Christianity to Samoa. Williams is remembered as the first missionary to bring the Gospel to Samoa, and Malietoa is celebrated by Samoan oratory as the first Christian convert. The meeting grounds on which this gathering took place is known as *Mataniu feagai ma le Ata* and is memorialized in Samoan oratory as the geographical origin of Christianity – the area from which Christianity would spread throughout Samoa.

[206] C. Sylvester Horne, *The Story of the L.M.S.* (London: New Bridge Street, Blackfriars, E.C, 1904), 42.

missionaries that he had helped convert and train. Reflecting on his meeting with Malietoa, Williams recorded that he made his intention clear from the beginning:

> After the Chief was seated we began to tell him the object of our coming…That we had brought him some native teachers to reside on his Island with his permission to teach himself and his people the knowledge of the true God. That we wished him to take them under his Protection that their persons should not be injured nor their little property plundered. That he would allow them a house to worship in and as many of his people as thought proper to attend worship with them. That he would allow them to teach his people to read and write and that if he and his people listened to the native teachers it was very probable that Missionaries from England would be sent to his land to carry on more effectually what natives might commence…[207]

The motive was clear from Williams point. Malietoa's response was one of warmth reception according to Williams:

> The Chief answered, and said that he was exceedingly glad to see us…That he would take care of the natives we had brought and also give them the large house in which we were assembled to worship in and allow any of his people who might wish to be taught the lotu or Praying system…[208]

The 'large house' is likely the *fale tele* of Malietoa's family on its *tulaga maota* named Feagai ma le Ata. This land is situated opposite the *malae* – official land or meeting grounds of a *nu'u* and its *fono*– known as Matāniu.[209] The meeting between Williams and Malietoa taking place

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[207] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams,* 73-74.

[208] *The Samoan Journals of John Williams,* ed. Richard Moyle, 74.

[209] For further reading about the origins and significance of the name *Matāniu feagai ma le Ata* in relation to Samoan oral tradition and Sapapali'i, see Esera Esera, "Land, Ecotheology, and Identity in Samoa," *Samoa Journal of Theology,* no.1 (2022): 100 – 111. See also, Mk. Le Mamea, *O Le Tusi Faalupega o Samoa,* 10 – Le Mamea notes that Matāniu is the *malae-fono* – meeting grounds – of the *nu'u* Sapapali'i. Malietoa's *tulaga maota* is "*Feagai ma le ata, ma Tualagi."* This is also the same names for the *tulaga maota* of the *matai* Papali'i of Sapapali'i. Esera notes that the names *Matāniu* and *Feagai ma le Ata* have one origin story. In Esera's account of the origin story, the land named *Matāniu* is opposite of the land originally named *Ata.*

in the 'large house' is cultural protocol when it comes to hosting guests. An *āiga*'s *fale tele* is space for meeting with honorary guests, but it is also the arena in which *āiga* deliberate on issues pertaining to their everyday lives. The *fale tele* is a sacred space – just as the land is – where the deities reside with their people. This is the space that Malietoa has offered for the initiation of the missionaries' labor.

In his later writing, Williams recalls Malietoa as stating:

> …In the meantime this house is yours as a temporary place in which to teach and worship; and when we come from the war we will erect any building you may require, and all the people who remain at home can come tomorrow if they please, and begin to learn about Jehovah and Jesus Christ.[210]

Williams' request shows three clear desires that he hoped to obtain from Malietoa. Firstly, "to take them under his Protection" implies both the need for security from potential troubles with the people and shelter for the missionaries. Secondly, "house to worship" is the desire for a space allocated for religious activities. And lastly, "allow them to teach his people to read and write" is an attempt to cross cultural boundaries – that is, to influence change through the change of norms. These three requests also foreshadow the three reasons that the mission would need land: residence, church building, and schools.

Malietoa's response provided assurance for Williams. The Tahitian teachers had already been welcomed hospitably to stay at Taimalelagi's (Malietoa's brother) home the day before, so as far as Williams' concern, the issue of housing was addressed. However, Malietoa and his brother would eventually agree within this time frame to house four missionaries each.[211] Regarding worship and teaching, Malietoa's offering of the *fale tele* for use aligned with the Samoans' understanding of the *fale tele'*s various purposes. This was already a designated space for teaching, learning, and worship. From a theological standpoint, the approval granted by Malietoa to use the 'large house,' and his hospitality and receptiveness to the LMS at Feagai ma

[210] Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprise,* 90.

[211] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams*, 73.

le Ata, is indicative of bringing forth the God of the missionaries into his *āiga* space. In other words, the act is a subtle replacing of the deities of Matāniu feagai ma le Ata with a new one.

The hospitality of Malietoa to the mission is the first case of Samoans welcoming both the mission and Christianity into the sphere of *āiga*. For Malietoa, the assertion to provide the missionaries a place to stay, a place to teach, and a place to worship, is no different than welcoming a stranger into the *āiga*. This intent is verified by John Williams' recollection of Malietoa's words to him on this occasion:

> This…is the happiest day of my life, and I rejoice that I have lived to see it. In future I shall consider ourselves and you as ainga [*aiga*] tasi, one family, and hope you will do the same.[212]

The phrase "temporary place" signifies that Feagai ma le Ata was the first *matū palapala* granted to the mission. The offer to "erect any buildings you may require" must be considered to mean "any buildings you may require on our *āiga* land," where Malietoa has a shared authority. This notion also implies a temporality in the gifting of land. The temporal nature of the offer is evident in the phrase "you may require." So long as the mission needs a facility, land will be allotted to the mission. And in the case where it isn't needed, the land can be redistributed for another purpose as needed by Malietoa and his *āiga.* This is the default interpretation of Malietoa's initial response.

John Williams departed Sapapali'i, leaving behind the Tahitian missionaries under the care of Malietoa. The missionaries commenced their labors in Sapapali'i. The 'mission station' strategy that the missionaries were familiar with from the LMS work done in their home island was adopted for Samoa. Matāniu feagai ma le Ata of "Sapapali'i became the central mission station, which served not only as the evangelistic base for the teachers but would later become the center for continued training and nurturing of the inner core of converts who were gathered there for worship and instruction."[213] In their endeavors, the missionaries visited neighboring *nu'u* to promote the religion, and held their Sabbath services at the *fale tele.*

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[212] Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprise*, 90.

[213] Ta'ase, "The CCCS," 144.

Malietoa was at war when one of his sons returned to Sapapali'i with the approval for him to convert to the LMS religion. At the time, the missionaries deliberated about building a chapel. Malietoa's son agreed with the plan, deciding "to co-operate in the building of a chapel."[214] Malietoa while at A'ana heard about the missionaries' desire and granted his permission for them to commence, sending over another son to assist with the work. However, differences came about between the brothers and their uncle Tuiano regarding the location where this chapel should be built:

> Tuiano their uncle wished the Chapel to be on his ground to which the young men would not agree. A serious quarrel resulted…Mariota went over to Upolu to his Father who gave orders that it should be erected on a grass flat near the sea beach facing his own dwelling.[215]

This is the first recorded instance in which a separate piece of land and facility was considered for the LMS, happening within the first eight months of John Williams meeting with Malietoa.[216] After the departure of John Williams from Sapapali'i, Tuiano asked the missionaries to pray for him as he prepared to join Malietoa's war party at A'ana.[217] He accredited his healthy return to Sapapali'i after a "fortnight" in Upolu to the prayers of the missionaries, and this was the foundation of his conversion.[218] From this perspective, Tuiano's volunteering to provide the land for the mission chapel is a symbol of gratitude to God for his safety, and a desire to bring this God into his space to dwell with him. He was moved to make the offer to gift his land by his conversion story. His desire for the wealth of the missionaries can be refuted by the fact that Tuiano made this offer at the absence of the white missionaries, and the material wealth had already been distributed to Malietoa and Taimalelagi. At this point in their reality with the missionaries, the Tahitians were somewhat dependent on the care and the wealth of their hosts.

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[214] Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'asāmoa," 73.

[215] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams*, 125.

[216] See Ronald Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'asāmoa," 74-75. Crawford notes that this war between Malietoa and A'ana began August 1830 and "ended nearly nine months later" in April of 1831.

[217] A'ana is an *ītūmālō.* Malietoa's war with A'ana was an act of vengeance for their killing of his relative Leiataua Tonumaipe'a Tamafaigā of Manono and the *ītūmālō* Aiga-i-le-Tai.

[218] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams*, 125.

For Malietoa's sons, the responsibility of addressing the mission's needs belonged to their father. Therefore, if space was requested, then that space was to come from Malietoa himself as he told Williams. Malietoa's response to his son regarding where the chapel should be built reflects an understanding of the strategic layout of the *āiga* landscape. An *āiga's fale tele* is usually situated on the family's *tulaga maota,* which is centered on the *malae.* The residential *fale* encircle or are situated surrounding the *fale tele.* Within the immediate vicinity is usually the residence of the *matai.* And it is these two structures that the highest of regards are afforded in the context of *āiga.* For the missionaries, they had been afforded the highest of cultural respect. They resided as guests to Malietoa and Taimalelagi, but they also conducted their worship in the *fale tele.* This is symbolic of the status they had been granted by the *matai* and *āiga* at Matāniu feagai ma le Ata. So, to maintain this level of respect for the mission, the most reasonable grounds of Malietoa's *āiga* land to place this chapel if the *fale tele* is no longer desired, is opposite of and "facing his own dwelling."

Several culturally significant ideas are presented in this case of gifting land to the LMS. Firstly, the intent in gifting land is born out of faith and commitment. Samoan land is a matter of the utmost importance, and it is meant to be allocated for the benefit of *āiga*. Therefore, to designate an area for the LMS is to deem the LMS as a benefit for *āiga*, indicative of the trust that a *matai* has for the cause of the mission. Furthermore, the desire to build a chapel on *āiga* land meant the opportunity to bring God into one's personal and familial space.

Secondly, the desire of Malietoa and his sons to place the facility "near the sea beach facing his own dwelling" highlights the level of respect afforded to the mission. As early as eight months into the LMS' endeavors in Samoa, there was a sense of reverence for the mission. Such location also highlights the desire of the *āiga* to visibly display the mission to the rest of their community. The 'inter-village competition' arguably finds its roots within the *nu'u* structure, as *āiga* relate their status to material wealth, and in this case, wealth that they can give to the mission. For Malietoa and his sons, and for Tuiano, the missionaries and their knowledge of God has made them the embodiment of God for Samoans, and therefore they have associated the act of fulfilling the missionaries' desires with fulfilling the will of God.

Lastly, the *fale tele* of Feagai ma le Ata was already the designated space for learning and worship granted to the LMS. For the neighboring settlements that had been engaged in the missionaries' efforts and converted, the *fale tele* was already the space for the LMS. However, the desire of the missionaries to hold an exclusive space for their activities reflected their desire to

break away from the multi-purpose use of the *fale tele.* Therefore, the original space was no longer desired or suitable for the purpose of the mission as understood by Malietoa and his brother.

Although the missionaries had received Malietoa's approval for their chapel, they decided to postpone their plans due to the familial tension at that time. At the end of the war in April of 1831, Malietoa returned to Sapapali'i and soon after, the chapel was built on the land he had suggested.[219] The location and facility was a sight to behold according to Charles Barff when he returned to Savai'i in 1834:

> The [foundation] at Sapalii was erected on a pier built down in the sea, and a large circular Chapel was erected upon it, wattled and plastered, well thatched over with the sugar cane leaf, floored with mats, and fitted up with seats, and pulpit…there were some other plastered Chapels but inferior to the above…[220]

The *tulaga maota* at Feagai ma le Ata*,* dedicated as a school and facility of worship for the LMS, is the first *matū palapala* gifted by Samoans to the LMS. The *fale tele* did not exist in a vacuum. It was in the space of *āiga* land. Much of Malietoa's *āiga* identity and old beliefs are attached to the location. Yet the granting of the land for the purpose of the mission reflects Malietoa welcoming the mission in the spirit of "*ainga tasi*" as he promised Williams and serves as a symbol of Malietoa replacing his old religion with that of the missionaries. However, for a variety of reasons, the mission felt the need to remove from the space, therefore the parcel on which the *fale tele* is situated is no longer of use. Although the space was dedicated to the LMS, the missionaries and their early Samoan following unquestionably understood the space as belonging to Malietoa and his *āiga*, gifted for the temporary usage of the mission.

The removal of the activities of the LMS from the *fale tele* to a different parcel of land within Malietoa's *āiga's* authority is arguably the first *igagatō* gifted to the LMS. This space, "grass flat near the sea facing his own dwelling place," is a specific location. This indicates Malietoa's intentionality in appointing a location for the facility. He has set a specific location for the LMS, therefore 'converging and appointing something into place.' So long as the mission

[219] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams*, 132.

[220] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams*, 141.

exists, the "grass flat near the sea facing his own dwelling place" is its *tofi.* For successive generations since Malietoa Vaiinupo, the *āiga* at Matāniu feagai ma le Ata have maintained this understanding.

At the centenary celebration of the LMS' arrival in Samoa and Malietoa's acceptance of the mission, a memorial stone was built to commemorate the occasion "on the actual site of John Williams's first steps in Samoa."[221] Oka Fauolo noted that the memorial stone sits on the location of the old church building.[222] In his *igagatō,* Malietoa not only made a permanent offer of that location for the LMS, but he also made them a 'permanent part of the social structure.' This is maintained not only by his descendants of his *āiga* at Matāniu feagai ma le Ata, but also the *nu'u* of Sapapali'i. This notion is reflected in the institution of the *nu'u*, where the *fono* long ago approved the following policy:

> *O le finagalo o le nuu, e le faaluaina le EFKS e se isi lotu. E avanoa tagata uma e tapuai e tusa ma lana aia saoloto, peita'i e ao ona tau savali i fafo atu ma Sapapalii e tapua'i ai. Pe a fai foi galuega a le EFKS, e aofia ma galulue faatasi ai tagata uma o isi ituaiga.* [223]
>
> Translation:
> It is the opinion of the nu'u that there shall be no other denomination but the EFKS. People reserve the right to worship where they choose, but they shall commute out of Sapapalii to worship. Also, if the EFKS has work, everyone is required to work together including other denominations.[224]

Through granting the LMS a permanent position in his *āiga*, the *nu'u* welcomed their new permanent resident as well. The LMS's place on the land of Matāniu feagai ma le Ata and in the institution of Sapapali'i was cemented. For all Malietoa was aware, that parcel was now the official designated space for the mission. The first official LMS land, church, school, and mission station

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[221] London Missionary Society, *The Chronicle of the London Missionary Society, VOL XXXVIII* (London: London Missionary Society, Livingstone House, 1930), 269.

[222] Fauolo, *Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i,* 682.

[223] *O le Sulu Samoa,* Aokuso 2022: 5.

[224] English translation provided by author.

was now in operation on "grass flat near the sea" at Matāniu feagai ma le Ata. From Matāniu feagai ma le Ata, the Tahitians travelled to neighboring *nu'u* and eventually throughout Savai'i between 1830 and 1832, spreading the Gospel and garnering the interest of the locals.

The Sabbath services were conducted in the newly built LMS chapel, and school was conducted regularly in this space. At the school, Malietoa's *āiga* and constituents of the *nu'u* Sapapali'i were educated by the missionaries on matters such as worship, reading, and writing. They were joined by those from the surrounding *nu'u* regularly. As a result, the new converts from surrounding areas took it upon themselves to allocate land for chapels in their own *nu'u* for the conducting of Christian worship. Although the Tahitians labored mostly in Savaii between 1830 and 1832, their impact and contribution to the initial stages of the mission is reflected in the various lands throughout Samoa that were now the bearer of Christian chapels.

An example of the Tahitian's success was discovered by John Williams on his return to Samoa. Upon arriving in the islands of Tutuila in the *nu'u* of Leone on the 18th of October 1832, he discovered a chief Amoamo and fifty Christian converts. Without a missionary to guide them, members of the community who had been in Savai'i and witnessed the teachings of the Tahitians brought the word of this new religion to Leone. From these teachings, the people "cast away the worship of their Spirits & acknowledged Jehova as their God."[225] The reflection of such commitment was evident when they showed Williams that they had built a chapel in their *nu'u* following the example of Sapapali'i.

From Tutuila, to Manono, and throughout Savai'i, *matai* converts were at the forefront of dedicating land to build chapels for LMS worship. The Tahitians in Savai'i would commute from Sapapalii to the various *nu'u* in their labors and within the first two years of mission, chapels were erected throughout the islands. In 1832, John Williams brought with him another Tahitian teacher to assist with the labors commenced by the teachers initially brought to Samoa. This teacher was left with the *matai* Matetau at Manono, making good on a promise Williams made with the *matai* when he departed Samoa in 1830.

[225] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams*, 107.

3.2.2 Apai

Tuilaepa Esekia Matetau, a *matai* of Apai Manono memorialized in the journals of John Williams as Matetau, had awaited the promised return of Williams with a teacher. One of the promises made by Matetau to Williams in their farewell in 1830 according to the missionary's account was to build a chapel for the mission.[226] The first chapel built in Samoa was the one at Sapapali'i in 1831. So how could Matetau have known that Christians dedicated a facility exclusively for worship in 1830?

Matetau's insight derives from his personal familial connections to the islands of Tonga. Missionary work of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) and LMS had commenced in Tonga decades before Williams arrived in Samoa. There in Tonga, Matetau's daughter Salote, was one of the wives of the "King of the Haapai's," the eventual king of Tonga and WMMS convert, Taufaahau.[227] During the early 19th century, inter-island travelling of islanders between Samoa and Tonga were of a regular occurrence. Therefore, updates regarding the happenings in Tonga were frequently received in Samoa, especially in Apai Manono where the people had close familial links to people in Tonga and served as a "focal point for gathering Tongans and Samoans."[228]

Word of the new white religion in Tonga had already made its way to Apai before Williams' arrival. This induced the curiosity of the likes of Matetau, hence his taking the opportunity to ask Williams for teachers of the religion. The Tahitian teacher Teava was brought to Matetau in 1832, and Matetau with the approval of the *fono* of Apai brought both the teacher and religion to the island of Manono.[229]

Writing to Williams about his experience in Apai after only a couple weeks of his residency with Matetau, Teava wrote:

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[226] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams*, 107.

[227] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams*, 176. See also Faulalo Kennar, "A History of the Apai Manono Congregational Christian Church 1830 – 1881," (BTh thesis, Malua Theological College, 2019), 15; John Garrett, "The Conflict between the London Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Methodists in 19th Century Samoa," *Journal of Pacific History,* no.9 (1974): 65. Taufaahau would become the Tu'i Kanokupolu, "consciously assumed as the highest title" by Taufaahau. He would be crowned King of Tonga as King George Tupou I in 1845. Tupou I would convert to Methodism under the WMMS.

[228] Garrett, "The Conflict between the LMS and Wesleyan Methodists," 65.

[229] Kennar, "A History of the Apai Manono CCCS," 21.

> I like this place very well. The Chief is kind. They supply me with food. We had a service yesterday in the large house. It was full of worshippers. The Chief with many people have become Christians…We are happy & comfortable…[230]

Like the situation of the Tahitian teachers in Sapapali'i, the *fale tele* of the Tuilaepa *āiga* of Apai was granted as *matū palapala* to the mission. Regarding residency, Matetau had set aside a parcel of his *āiga* land for Teava and his wife.[231] Matetau's main intention of bringing a missionary was to learn of the religion. So, from this angle, Matetau likely understood the residency of Teava as temporal in that the teacher and his wife were there to teach and await further instructions regarding what's next. Therefore, the terms of this gifted land were to be understood in the framework of *matū palapala*. The residency was temporal, and it was a symbol of Matetau's hospitality.

Between 1832 and 1836, the Tahitians efforts were evident. *Nu'u* throughout Upolu and Savai'i had allocated land for chapels and built these chapels in the model of the one at Sapapali'i. By 1835, with the approval, support, and assistance of Matetau, Teava built the first chapel in Manono. The Tahitians' influence was visibly present in the form of land dedicated to LMS worship. Not only were these chapels a space for the locals to observe the Sabbath, but they were the exclusive place allocated to meet the teachers when they would come for lessons. The LMS had space exclusively dedicated by converted *matai* and *āiga* for their multi-purpose use. The teachers commuted to these various *nu'u* and were hosted by the *matai* and *āiga* of their new converts when they spent days at a time in these settlements. However, the only *nu'u* where they were apportioned *matū palapala* in 1832 for the purpose of building dwelling houses were Sapapali'i and Apai.

[230] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams*, 165.

[231] Kennar, "A History of the Apai Manono CCCS," 21.

3.2.3 A Sidenote – *Nu'u* Authority: *Tafi ma le Eleele*

The mission, still in its early stages, had to navigate the complexity that is the autonomy of *nu'u.* Although Malietoa accepted the mission, a central political authority did not exist in Samoa. This is partially why Malietoa was selective of the places that the missionaries would go. However, this did not stop the missionaries from their laboring throughout the islands. One of the earliest experiences of the missionaries and the complexity of *nu'u* authority was seen in Lalomalava when Boti "formed an attachment to the place & people & has taken up his residence there as their teacher."[232]

Tagaloa sent for a teacher to stay with him, and Boti came to Lalomalava as a result. Boti lived with Tagaloa for days at a time, teaching him and his *āiga* about Christianity. However, the *nu'u* was indifferent about Tagaloa's decision:

> It appears that there are two or three Chiefs of nearly equal authority at Malava & they were angry with Tagnaloa for bringing a teacher of the word to reside there, saying the Spirit would be angry with them & come & kill them all therefore send him away…The heathen Chiefs sent word to Malietoa of the obstinacy & begged that he would support them in enforcing him to comply with their wishes. Malietoa replied that he could do no such thing…The heathen party were now greatly enraged…so much that the women children & property belonging to Tagnaloa & his party were brought down to Sapapalii.[233]

This is the first case of banishment experienced by an LMS convert. Although the authority of land is vested in *matai* and *āiga*, the *fono*'s responsibility is the well-being, order and stability of the *nu'u.* Therefore, the *fono* reserves the right to exercise its authority regarding matters that affect the *nu'u,* and an assumed power in this authority is the ability to banish those that do not comply to the *nu'u*'s policies.

Banishment, an ancient Samoan custom, is the indefinite 'removal of a person or their family from *āiga* land and sometimes from the *nu'u* itself."[234] Such a practice presents one of the

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[232] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams*, 135.

[233] Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams*, 135-137.

[234] Le Tagaloa, "Sua le Lea – Toto le Ata," 188

rare but not uncommon instances that land may be stripped from a person, or moreso a person may be detached from their land. Banishment presents one of the few instances in which a Samoan may become landless. Such a consequence was only possible if the *fono* or *āiga* came to consensus, a consensus that includes the possibility of a *matai* voting in favor of banishing someone from their own *āiga*.[235] To be removed from one's ancestral land, or to have property burned as in *mu le foaga,* are symbolic of the death of one's connectedness and relation to land, *āiga,* and/or *nu'u.* Such a punishment is commonly reserved for the most atrocious of offenses in *āiga* and *nu'u.* Fanaafi writes:

> Banishment is one of the heaviest Samoan customary punishments. Several Samoan terms are used to refer to it. *Tafi ma le eleele* literally means to be wiped of the land or exiled, while *soloia i le aufuefue* and *oso ma le lau* carry the same connotation. It keeps company with other punishments such as *ai ma le teve* – slow death resulting from having to eat a poisonous plant, and *mu le foaga* – everything you own is burnt to the ground. That people may be in buildings when they are burned down will not stop the execution of this punishment. They will die in the fire if they do not escape. Such a devastating and permanent impact means something rather grievous would have to occur to warrant it.[236]

This is not an easy decision to come to. As evident in Williams' account of Tagaloa's banishment, the *fono* did what they could to avoid this decision, as noted in their consultation of Malietoa. However, Tagaloa held steadfast to his newfound faith, and the consequence was his removal from his own land.

Tagaloa's banishment from Lalomalava by the *fono* foreshadows the importance of the mission infiltrating the *nu'u.* In the first five years of the mission, they had a presence through land allocated for chapels in a lot of *nu'u.* However, most of these chapels reflected the conversion of individual *matai* and their immediate *āiga.* And more than likely, these individual *matai* converts were a part of Malietoa's immediate circle of influence. This is most evident when in 1835, teachers were spread throughout Samoa; however, only through Malietoa's network of *matai:*

[235] Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 193.

[236] Le Tagaloa, "Sua le Lea – Toto le Ata," 188.

"Moia had moved to Falelatai, the village of To'oā (Lilomai'ava) a close relative of Malietoa. Raki was stationed at Mulifanua, a village closely associated with Taimalelagi's title, Boti with Malietoa's ally, Tagaloa, at Iva. Tereauore lived at Sale'imoa which had some Sā Malietoā connections, and was near Vai'inupō's Tuamasaga villages of Sagana."[237]

3.2.4 A Mutual Understanding

By 1836, *matū palapala* was granted in the above *nu'u* by individual *matai* and their *āiga* mainly for the erection of dwelling houses. Some of these *matai's* dedicated their *fale tele* for worship and school, and eventually allocated a separate piece of land for this purpose. However, whether the chapel land was meant to be an *matū palapala* or *igagatō* for the LMS varies from case to case.

So long as the Tahitian teachers were concerned, the land and facilities – dwelling houses and the chapels – were dedicated to carrying out the work of God but belonged to the *āiga* and *nu'u.* The facilities were disposable, always subject to what the *āiga* and or *nu'u* pleased. Furthermore, the temporality of land allocated to the mission had a dependence on the *fono* accepting this new religion into a *nu'u.* All that the teachers were sure of at this point, is that there was exclusive space dedicated to LMS work in them in most *nu'u* they labored in. But this culture of understanding land would shift in June of 1836 when six European missionaries of the LMS from London arrived to commence their labors in Samoa.[238]

3.3 A Misunderstanding – *Matū palapala* and Mission Property – 1836 to 1850

Although the allocation of land for chapels in various *nu'u* was early symptoms of the need to adjust the mission strategy to the Samoan context, the approach of the mission still centered on the 'mission station strategy.' Such a strategy "involved the acquisition of land and the building of residences, schools, hospitals, orphanages, printing establishments, and helpers' quarters"

[237] Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'asāmoa," 115-116.

[238] Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'asāmoa," 121.

within a fixed location.[239] The desired result was to "create a community of Christian converts gathered from the whole surrounding district, who came not only to worship but also to live permanently."[240] However, this was a utopian idea in the context of Samoa. But likely out of cultural ignorance, the mission insisted the strategy was most effective until 1850 to 1854, when "the Samoan teachers began to infiltrate the villages as "theological graduates" and the villages tended to facilitate, in every means, the Christian cause."[241]

In 1836, missionaries were stationed at "Pagopago and Leone on Tutuila, Apia on Upolu, Manono, and at Sapapali'i and Safune on Savai'i," while the teachers continued their labors in the *nu'u* previously noted.[242] In these spaces, land had already been allocated by converted *matai* and *āiga* for a chapel to conduct worship and teaching as well as land for dwelling houses. From these stations, the missionaries resided and conducted their work as the teachers did in the previous years. The only difference now, was that the missionaries were more vocal about their desire to build separate facilities to differentiate the chapels from the schools and such. The need for separate facilities for schools, and in 1839, a printing press, required the allocation of land.

3.3.1 Leulumoega & Nu'uausala*:* Printing Press, Dwelling House, & District Chapel

In 1839, the Printing Press of the LMS was established in Falelatai in Matamatanonofo where Malietoa's relative To'oā, who was at this time the paramount chief of A'ana – Tuimaleali'ifano - resided. Tuimaleali'ifano had allocated a parcel of land for the press and named it "Peretania" to commemorate the Britain of where the missionaries were from.[243] The year before the press, the chapel that he previously approved in 1832 on Matamatanonofo became too small to host the increasing number of converts in Falelatai, therefore requiring a bigger facility. The *Aiga Taua'ana,* a collective of four important *matai* and their *āiga* in Falelatai*,* stepped up to

[239] Ta'ase, "The Congregational Christian Church in Samoa," 172.

[240] Ta'ase, "The Congregational Christian Church in Samoa," 173.

[241] Tutoatasi Toalima, "Feagaiga and Taxation: A Historical Critique of the Debate Between the CCCS and the Samoan Government Concerning Taxation of Church Ministers," (MTh thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2019), 76.

[242] Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'asāmoa," 122. 'Missionaries' will refer now to the White LMS teachers to distinguish them from the 'native' teachers.

[243] Mafua, "A History of CCCS Matautu Falelatai," 24. "Peretania" is the literal Samoan translation for "Britain."

provide land for the new chapel.[244] The removal of the chapel from Matamatanonofo to Matautu is another sign of a mutual understanding of land reverting to the original owner(s) when it was no longer of use. However, when the land was needed for the press, Tuimaleali'ifano again willingly obliged.

The missionary placed at Falelatai to commence and work the printing press was John Stair. He also overtook leadership of the station at Falelatai from the teachers, and became "recognised as pastor of the church and congregation at Falelatai."[245] Stair served at Falelatai as the leader of the station and printing press, contributing to the building of the new chapel on land gifted by the *matai* Nanai and his *āiga*, conducting regular school and worship, and overseeing the operations of the printing press, until his departure from Falelatai in 1843.[246] The LMS noted that Stair's relocation was "in consequence of the state of his health."[247] The press at Matamatanonofo was in a declining state at Stair's removal, and therefore the LMS Samoa District Committee (SDC) also recommended the relocation of the printing press which required a new facility and land:

> That owing to the dilapidated state of the printing office Br Hardie, Mills, and Stair be appointed a committee to make immediate arrangements for purchasing a piece of ground at Leulumoega or Nofoalii and for erecting thereon a good stone building upon the most economical plan consistent with strength and durability.[248]

The minute of the LMS SDC meeting asserts that priority is granted to building a facility for the printing press, and 'arrangements' were to be made to 'purchase' land. The conflicting understanding of land as inalienable and land as private property was unfolding. The mission was sure to allocate funds to 'purchase' land. But ironically, Stair had the most important connection to A'ana land, which include land in both Leulumoega and Nofoali'i. And that connection was the

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[244] Mafua, "A History of CCCS Matautu Falelatai," 18.

[245] *The Report of the Directors to the Forty-Eighth General Meeting of the London Missionary Society* (London: W. M'Dowall, 1842), 49.

[246] Mafua, "A History of CCCS Matautu Falelatai," 18.

[247] *The Report of the Directors to the Forty-Eighth General Meeting of the London Missionary Society*, 49.

[248] LMS, "Samoa District Committee, Minutes of Meeting, August 10 1843."

paramount chief of A'ana, Tuimaleali'ifano. Stair gave Tuimaleali'ifano his request, and in 1842, Tuimaleali'ifano granted as *matū palapala*, a piece of his *āiga* land known as Nu'uausala in Leulumoega.[249] Stair also built his dwelling here in 1842.[250]

Every *ītūmālō* has a 'political center,' the grounds where the *ītūmālō* meet to deliberate organize, and where the "orators were considered king-makers, political kingpins in Samoan politics."[251] For the *ītūmālō* of A'ana, the *nu'u* of Leulumoega is this center, and its *malae* known as Ma'auga is where decisions of A'ana are made. Tuimaleali'ifano's strong ties to the political center of his *ītūmālō* is reflected in his allocation of his *āiga* land to the LMS to erect their new printing press and his dwelling.

By the 1840's, Samoans viewed books as a source of power, and therefore the printing press was the source and distributor of this power. Books were where the knowledge possessed by the missionaries and teachers derived from. Therefore, the people correlated the location of the printing press as a location of power as well. Describing attitudes Samoans had about the location of the printing press, Stair wrote:

> During the deliberations of one of the districts of Upolu, as to whether they should join in the undertaking, one speaker made an amusing proposition. After saying that he did not see why the press should be stationary, and one land honored by continually sending out books to all the others, he proposed that instead of a house, a vessel should be built, to which the printing establishment should be removed, and the vessel proceed in rotation to all the districts in Samoa, and book be printed, at each place; thus, all cause for jealousy on this head would be removed.[252]

This attitude about the location of the printing press indicates the Samoans correlated the printing press and books with status. The land at Matamatanonofo had the printing press, therefore elevating its already significant status in the eyes of Samoans. And now that it was in Leulumoega, it seems like the 'political center' of A'ana was now even more powerful as the possessor and

[249] Mafua, "A History of CCCS Matautu Falelatai," 26.

[250] Sibree, *A Register of Missionaries,* 42.

[251] Liuaana, "Samoa Tula'i," xviii.

[252] *Samoan Reporter*, March 1845, 3.

distributor of knowledge. The spirit of 'inter-village competitiveness' is the root of the 'jealousy.' By this point, everyone had chapels. Now everyone wants a printing press, or some element of the LMS that would elevate the status of their *nu'u.*

Stair relocated to Leulumoega, "where the climate is more salubrious" and suitable for the state of his supposed health.[253] There he took over the station at Leulumoega, overseeing at least six *nu'u* congregations in the nearby areas.[254] After some convincing, Stair was able to unite several villages and set an agreement to meet at Leulumoega for worship. This unification was perhaps made possible by the fact that Leulumoega was the 'political center' of A'ana. In 1845, on land most likely allocated by the *fono* of Leulumoega, a new and bigger chapel was built in place of the chapel originally built in Leulumoega, on the same land. Reporting the progress at Leulumoega, Stair noted:

> During the past year I have succeeded in uniting some scattered congregations into one…My strength would not admit of my supplying more than two (services) on the Sabbath, and the prejudice and jealousy of the people rendered it necessary that services should be conducted in the several chapels, they refusing to unite in attending worship at another village, although within two minutes walk of each other…I proposed an occasional union. This was acceded to; and led to the permanent union of the three largest congregations every Sabbath morning…We are now making arrangements to pull down our chapel at this place, Leulumoega, in size about 72 by 24ft, and which has cost the people a great deal of property, and to build another of much larger dimensions, in which work 6 villages will unite.[255]

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[253] *The Report of the Directors to the Forty-Eighth General Meeting of the London Missionary Society*, 49. David Mafua provides an alternative story about the reason for Stair's request for relocation from Falelatai: "The word was, at night time the village people would hear the printing machine turn on while no one was working. Some said that it must be some bad spirit turning the machines on and off. The noises according to the members of the Tuimalealiifano family were their family ancestors who were awakened by the sound of the old printer. Mrs Stair was terrified of the noises and complained that there was too much noise at night and could not sleep, and so Rev. Stair was concerned for his wife and asked To'oa Sualauvi for the printing press to be relocated." David Mafua, "A History of CCCS Matautu Falelatai," 26.

[254] *Samoan Reporter*, March 1845, 3.

[255] *Samoan Reporter*, March 1845, 3.

Stair departed Samoa with his wife on November 12, 1845.[256] His departure raised concern for the LMS SDC, especially regarding the land on which the dwelling house was on:

> We have received the following report of the committee respecting which we would add, that the house was very much reduced in value when M Stair left it, and that there is no title for the land on which it stands.[257]

Stair's connections with Tuimaleali'ifano made the gifting of land for the press and the dwelling house possible. And considering Stair's lack of a "title," he also understood the terms of the lands used. Tuimaleali'ifano gifted these spaces for the mission to use, and Stair operated on his approval and designation. On the contrary, it appears that funding was granted to Stair, certainly for the purchase of land for the press and the dwelling house. Writing to the Directors of the LMS, George Drummond of the LMS SDC stated:

> The Committee appointed to confer with M Stair & Sunderland in reference to M Stair's dwelling house at Leulumoega not being able to come to any definite arrangement hereby refer the matter to you certifying that M Stair was at considerable expense & trouble in the building of his house. M Stair will make the necessary explanations in reference to expenses and the tenor in which the house is.[258]

For the missionaries, the land was supposed to be purchased as private property. However, Stair recognized the cultural differences in understanding lands. It was the respect for the LMS that made the gifting of land for the press, the dwelling house, and the new chapel at Leulumoega possible. And these were freely given by *matai, āiga, nu'u,* and A'ana, for the usage of the mission and so long as it was useful, the mission possessed it. However, even in its usefulness, the land still belonged to *āiga* and *nu'u.* Stair recognized that lands gifted to the LMS in Leulumoega in the framework of *matū palapala.* Manono also recognized *matū palapala* to the LMS from Leulumoega when they declared war on A'ana.

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[256] Sibree, *A Register of Missionaries, Deputations,* 42.

[257] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, August 18, 1846."

[258] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, August 18, 1846."

Tensions between A'ana and Manono were renewed in May of 1847, leading to an outbreak of violence instigated by Manono:

> On the 15th June Mr. Heath was informed by the Manono chiefs that they meant to attack Fasitoo next day, unless its people would meet and fight them at a specificed place west of Aana, and neutral ground. At that time the Fasitoo people; after consultation with the Missionaries and with Leulumoega the head quarters of Aana, had abandoned their settlement and taken away most of their moveable property, and this purposely to prevent bloodshed…and on the 23rd June, determined to arm and go to Fasitoo…The war party took what talo and other eatables they chose. They greatly damanged a large number of houses by cutting supports, fastenings &c, and committed other acts deemed in Samoa, very insulting.[259]

Among the destruction was the remains of the Leulumoega chapel. In 1848, the British Consul in Samoa, George Pritchard, along with Captain Worth from the British warship, issued a fine against the Manono war party.[260] However, the LMS SDC stood in opposition of this punishment. One of the reasons for this opposition is recorded in the minutes of the LMS SDC meeting of December 1848:

> …and secondly; because we believe that many of the natives did not distinctly understand that the chapel was mission property, and destroyed it under the impression that it belonged to Aana.[261]

The people of the small island of Manono, the responsible party for the damages done to the chapel, were all too familiar with land dedicated to the mission. Tuilaepa Matetau gifted *matū palapala* for a chapel and dwelling house to the LMS in Apai. And soon after, two other *matai* and *āiga* allocated land for chapels in neighboring Manono *pitonu'u*, raising the total to three chapels; one of which was in the *nu'u* of Fauea – Salua. The WMMS had arrived in Manono and was

[259] *Samoan Reporter,* September 1847, 1.

[260] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, December 3rd 4th & 6th 1848."

[261] LMS "Samoa District Committee Minutes, December 3rd 4th & 6th 1848."

embraced in Faleū and Salua, on the respective *malae*'s Faleū and Utuagigi. Ironically, the WMMS had the strongest connections in Apai, but Tuilaepa Matetau died a devout LMS deacon in 1847 and Apai remained an LMS exclusive village.[262]

Manono's interaction with the missions, especially the LMS, shows their familiarity with Christianity. Therefore, Manono also genuinely understood the concept of granting land to the LMS, as well as the purpose of the chapels and LMS facilities. What Leulumoega gifted for the LMS in Leulumoega, Manono gifted for the LMS in Manono. Considering this shared understanding, the destruction of the Leulumoega chapel was indeed intentional, and the missionaries' reasoning for disagreeing with the fine on Manono is valid. The Manono war party knew the facility was the place of worship and activities for the LMS, but they also knew that the land the facility occupied belonged to A'ana, which led to their conscious decision to destroy the facility. Manono granted their mission land in the spirit of *matū palapala*, therefore they understood that the land was for temporary use of the mission, but always under their authority. So, in the eyes of Manono, they did not destroy mission property, they destroyed A'ana property, because the land is always subject to A'ana's authority. Manono's actions reflects their own understanding regarding lands that their fellow *matai* and *āiga* granted to the mission. And that understanding is that the authority and ownership of the lands were not intended to transfer over permanently to the LMS, they were allocated for temporal use, therefore the *pule* remained vested in the *matai* and *āiga,* or *fono* and *nu'u.*

3.3.2 Palauli*:* LMS Property or *Matū palapala?*

In 1843, tensions between the *ītūmālō* of Palauli and Fa'asaleleaga – the governing *ītūmālō* including the *nu'u* of Sapapali'i and Lalomalava mentioned in the previous sections – culminated in November of 1843, when Safotulafai – the 'political center' of Fa'asaleleaga, declared war on the Falelua:

> After nearly 14 years slumber of the demon of war has again been aroused again. The Faasaleleaga, and the Falelua, are two contiguous districts on the Island of Savaii, which

[262] *Samoan Reporter,* September 1847, 2.

> have been at variance for the last 18 month…the Faasaleleaga forces entered the Falelua, and commenced the work of destruction, by killing pigs, cutting down fruit trees, destroying plantations, burning houses, and dragging the very dead from their graves to be exposed to such indignities as are revolting to the feelings of enlightened humanity…in laying waste the land, the Faasaleleaga decided not to pursue the objects of their wrath, and returned from the scene of desolation.[263]

The missionary Alexander Maconald, originally assigned to Safune Savai'i in 1837, was relocated to oversee the Palauli station in 1839.[264] A medical expert by trade, his skills were in 'great demand,' requiring him to be at the Palauli station for most of the year so that the missions could reach him when needed.[265] However, Macdonald still proved able to conduct teachings in his mission district, visiting the neighboring *nu'u* and building rapport with *matai* and *fono* on behalf of the LMS. In October of 1840, a church was formed in Palauli. His efforts in the outstation showed that he prioritized relationship building with the *matai.* His sensitivity to the cultural authority of the polity made him a revered missionary in Palauli.

Upon learning of Safotulafai's declaration of war on Palauli, the Falelua submitted to the request of Macdonald to flee from their *nu'u* and take refuge elsewhere. The respecting of Macdonald's wishes is reflective of the rapport that the missionary was able to build with the respective *fono's* of the Falelua. Although the Falelua's absence prevented human casualties, it also meant their land was defenseless and at the mercy of Safotulafai:

> *O le masina o Ianuari na oo ai le taua i le Falelua. A ua manuia le aoaiga a le latou faifeau o Misi Matono, ua usiusitai le Falelua, ua latou sola…Ona faaleagaina ai lea le fanua o Palauli ma Satupaitea…a e le i gata ai, ua toe sofaia ma le fale o Misi Matono, ua faatafunaina, ua faataugaina ana puaa ma upuvaleina ana tavini.*[266]

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[263] *Samoan Reporter,* March 1845, 4. The "Falelua" – two houses - is a reference to the allyship of two *nu'u* – Palauli and Satupa'itea.

[264] Sibree, *A Register of Missionaries, Deputations,* 36.

[265] *The Report of the Directors to the Forty-Ninth General Meeting of the London Missionary Society*, (London: W. M'Dowall, 1843), 35.

[266] *O le Sulu Samoa: March 1844.*

Translation:

In the month of January, the war commenced in Falelua. But the Reverend Maconald's teachings were successful, the Falelua obeyed him, and fled…Then the lands of Palauli and Satupaitea were destroyed…furthermore, Missionary Macdonald's dwelling was attacked, burned, his pigs were wasted and his servants were harassed.[267]

As with the case of Manono, Fa'asaleleaga had already established chapels and dwellings for the LMS on lands allocated by *matai* and *āiga.* By 1843, Fa'asaleleaga was a mission stronghold. However, their perception of the terms and conditions of their own lands gifted to the LMS is reflected in their destruction of the LMS facility in Palauli. From their lens, the land on which Macdonald was gifted by Palauli for residence was to be understood in the same sense as the lands on which the missionaries and teachers resided in their *nu'u* and *ītūmālō* – they were allocated for a temporary use. Therefore, the land in Palauli still belonged to its individual *matai* and *fono.* This perspective is evident in their destruction of the mission dwelling, just as it was for the case of Manono and the chapel at Leulumoega.

3.3.3 *Matū palapala* in the Context of War

Ronald Crawford cites the missionary William Harbutt – who labored for the LMS in Samoa between 1839 and 1860 – as noting that the "house of a missionary was considered sacred." A point that Crawford supported in stating that "Mission property was indeed, always granted immunity in time of war, so that villagers sought refuge there, or, at the least, brought their valuables to save them from pillage."[268] This research disproves this claim because it is too general. In the period of 1836 to 1850, the Samoans generally viewed 'missionary property' throughout *nu'u* and *āiga* land as belonging to original owners of the land. The Samoans did not distinguish mission property and Samoan inheritance. Even in cases where a building was erected at the expense of the mission funds, it was not built in isolation; therefore, the land that the building stood on reflected the real owners of 'property.'

[267] English translation provided by author.

[268] Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'asāmoa," 225.

The lands on which 'mission property' – chapels, dwelling houses, schools – occupied, were given freely with the mindset that the land gift was for temporary use. The destruction of the chapel in Leulumoega and the mission house at Palauli are prime examples of this claim, but they were not rare occurrences. The LMS SDC meeting held at Apia on June of 1848 adjourned with the decision to hold the next meeting at Lepa upon the return of the John Williams in that year. However, due to the outbreak of war throughout the islands, the meeting was postponed and relocated to Malua.[269] The SDC's sadness regarding the war is recorded throughout the minutes:

> In consequence of the Safata district being broken up owing to the war…Resolved that we approve of M Nisbet's having gone to assist M M(acdonald) in the Faasaleaga district for the present until the Safata people again return to their lands…We have deeply to deplore that our worst fears have been realized in reference to the war in these islands. Stations have been broken up, land laid waste in Aana and the Tuamasaga.[270]

The reference to "stations being broken" is literal and figurative. In its literal sense, mission facilities had been destroyed; figuratively, the network of Samoan teachers that were trained and sent out to the outstations by the missionaries had to flee, and so did the congregations in *nu'u* that made up Safata, Tuamasaga, and Palauli respectively. These facilities were not distinguished because for the Samoans, the lands belonged to them. This was not an unfortunate case of war, these were intentional acts of violence rooted in the Samoan understanding of land and land ownership. They associated their own gifted lands as temporary grants to the cause of the mission, and that interpretation was applied on lands of war rivals that were allocated to the LMS.

The claim of Samoans holding the view of mission property as "sacred" and having "immunity" in the time of war, at least in the period between 1836 and 1850, is far from the truth. For so long as the Samoan was concerned, Samoan land generally was not "property" of non-Samoans. Although there are exceptions to this logic for the mentioned time, (specifically noting Malua as discussed in the previous chapter), the view of Harbutt and Crawford is relevant in a latter period.

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[269] LMS "Samoa District Committee Minutes, December 3rd 4th & 6th 1848."

[270] LMS "Samoa District Committee Minutes, December 3rd 4th & 6th 1848."

The ‘mission property,’ that is their facilities, were disposable. The lands they occupied belonged to *āiga* and *nu’u*, and authority of those lands remained as such even in the case of *matū palapala*. However, the missionary – the possessor of knowledge of God – was ‘sacred,’ and therefore generally untouchable. After the destruction of Palauli, Macdonald was ironically relocated to Sapapali’i, a part of the Fa’asaleleaga district.

> Owing to the entire breaking of up of M Macdonald’s station occasioned by the war, and also to his removal to the Fa’asaleleaga he was obliged to abandon his house and fine another. He could not under these circumstances pay for a second house and therefore we asked that he be allowed the sum of £60 to pay for another dwelling. As he removed to M Hardie’s house at Sapapalii he arranged to pass over that sixty pounds to aid M H in erecting another dwelling at Malua.[271]

The respect of the missionaries is clear here. Fa’asaleleaga had welcomed Macdonald with open arms, even though it was his house that they destroyed. Macdonald’s presence in the *ītūmālō* that burned the house he built most likely didn’t bother the locals. For all they knew, Macdonald was unaffected by the war, for it was Palauli’s land and therefore Palauli’s property that were destroyed, not the missionaries.

3.3.4 *Matū palapala:* Mission Houses - The Temporal Space Is Private Property

By the 1840’s, most *nu’u* had a *matai* and *āiga,* usually the first LMS Christian converts from this *nu’u*, that had gifted land for LMS chapels. The mission stations of which the missionaries were assigned upon their arrival already had space for the LMS, and on those allotted premises the missionaries built their dwellings and school space. The missionaries understanding was that house and facilities built for the LMS purpose, even on land gifted by *matai* and *āiga* and/or *nu’u* and *fono,* was automatically the property of the mission:

[271] LMS “Samoa District Committee Minutes, 13th 14th 15th June 1849.”

> …It is further our opinion that the houses of our respective stations should be considered the property of the Society and not of any individual missionary as in the event of his connection with the Society being dissolved, the house and land, in connection with his station, might if sold, fall into the hands of parties opposed to our mission and our work. If however an extra allowance be made by the Directors for house building, it will not only free us from many difficulties but secure to the Society all the houses as mission property.[272]

The LMS had allocated funds for the building of mission houses, and in some instances, the missionaries built the dwellings at their own expense. It appears that funds were dispersed to missionaries for both the house and land that the property was built on, but as discussed in the first chapter, the Samoans had no previous experience with permanent alienation. This would mean that whatever goods the missionaries thought they had exchanged for land with Samoans, was most likely interpreted as a gift for the hospitality of Samoans. Furthermore, the only alternative understanding of such exchange would have been land "use-rights were given, service to the giver was provided in return," but a permanent alienation was not at all considered by Samoans.[273] However, the missionaries understanding of private property, land ownership, and the sale of land persisted.

The LMS SDC, as noted earlier in this chapter, saw an issue with Stair not having a title for the land of his mission dwelling in Leulumoega. It is most probable that the lack of a title for Leulumoega is because Stair, who had close contacts with Tuimalealiifano, acknowledged that the land was free and meant to be a temporal space for residence. Another similar case is that of the Missionary George Drummond, who was assigned to Falealupo in 1841.

Drummond's assignment was to "commence a new station" there.[274] Like the rest of the cases mentioned earlier, Drummond was alotted land by *matai* for temporary usage for his dwelling. However, when Drummond was removed from Falealupo in 1844, he requested through the LMS SDC that the Directors of the Society grant him £50 to build a house in Saoluafata just

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[272] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, 12th & 13th June 1846."

[273] Malama Meleisea and Penelope Schoeffel, "Land, Custom and History in Sāmoa," *The Journal of Samoan Studies,* no. 5 (2015): 23.

[274] Sibree, *A Register of Missionaries, Deputations,* 47.

as he had in Falealupo. The house in Falealupo, according to the mission, was now under their authority, and they granted the use of the house as a dwelling for the teachers and a classroom. However, they also tasked Drummond with transferring the house and land to the LMS:

> …and that a memorandum be signed by M Drummond, on the back of the agreement for purchase, testifying that the house and land are the property of the Directors and the memorandum deposited in the general box.[275]

By 1845, the skills of reading and writing were taking form in Samoa. The schools in local *nu'u* were very effective in promoting literacy. However, the idea of the permanent loss of land was still arguably incomprehensible. Therefore, any agreement regarding the transferring of authority of land before 1889 must be scrutinized considering the Samoan framework of land gifting. Furthermore, Samoa in this period was without a central government to legitimize any form of documentation asserting land ownership, including the mission.

3.4 *Matū palapala:* The Temporality of Lands Gifted for Church Buildings

The Missionary Stair suggested that it was his persuasion of the various *nu'u* congregations within the vicinity of Leulumoega that led to his 'success' in 'uniting' this group of *nu'u* to build the Leulumoega chapel and gather there regularly.[276] However, Leulumoega's status as the 'political center' of A'ana is more likely the reason that the *nu'u* nearby agreed to his request. Understanding the autonomy of the Samoan *nu'u* and the institutions of alliances that form *ītūmālō* were one of the earliest barriers faced by the European missionaries. The 'mission station strategy' was successful elsewhere, as indigenous people in various contexts decided to permanently leave their residency to be near or in the mission compound. But for Samoa, the complexity of the Samoan socio-political system meant that such a strategy needed to consider the Samoan notion of 'political centers,' something that the mission didn't recognize early on.

For instance, the case of Thomas Slayter and his desire to unite the neighboring *nu'u* congregations near his station at Saoluafata to build one chapel in his assigned *nu'u* in 1843:

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[275] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, 5th & 6th November 1845."

[276] *Samoan Reporter*, March 1845, 3.

> Here he was fighting against the prestige of the leading village of Atua, Lufilufi…Six months after his arrival in Saluafata, he met with a cold response to his initial suggestion that the people of Lufilufi worship in his village, which was adjacent to their own.[277]

Leulumoega is the 'political center' of A'ana, and of equal status is the 'political center' of Atua, Lufilufi. The *matai* of Lufilufi made their issue with Slayter's request very clear:

> …They are the aristocracy of Atua – their land the metropolis – with them is preeminence. They wished to have the chapel on their own ground & not on that of Saluafata – they wished to build the chapel themselves they said in fact they were above asking the assistance of another place. – "Did the father wish to lean upon the child?"[278]

Although Slayter was insistent about his request, his lack of cultural understanding led to his failure to achieve his goal. For Stair, had he asked Leulumoega to partake in worship in a chapel in another *nu'u* of A'ana, their response would have been the same. However, Stair was fortunate and successful for two reasons: firstly, Leulumoega is the 'political center' of A'ana and secondly, he had the support of the paramount chief, Tuimaleali'ifano, in his corner. Understanding the power dynamics at-play in the *ītūmālō* could've assisted Slayter and the mission in the implementation of their 'mission station strategy.' But then Samoans are more closely associated with their *āiga* and *nu'u,* which would have still meant an eventual transition to the 'village church model.'

In the *nu'u* structure, the *fono* holds the responsibility of maintaining law and order. But the *matai* in *fono* do not always assume equal rank in the governance of *nu'u.* The *ali'i* and *tulafale* each have their own ceremonial and political roles. There is also a hierarchy within the institution that designates the status and rank of each *matai.* In the *fono,* matters are deliberated and every *matai* has a say, but when differences arise and the *fono* is split on a decision, the *matai* of higher rank play their role as peacekeepers and decision makers.

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[277] Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'asāmoa," 357.

[278] Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'asāmoa," 357.

The dynamics in *nu'u* relationships played a role in the locating and relocating of LMS land within *nu'u.* This mobility generally reflected the temporal nature of *matū palapala.* Examples of this mobility include the transition of the LMS chapel from Matamatanonofo to the land of the *matai* Nanai in Falelatai mentioned earlier. It shows the understanding that the gifting of land to the LMS in the early stages of the mission - for chapels and dwelling houses - was generally temporal. It also shows the complexity of *nu'u* institutions. Tuimaleali'ifano, the paramount *Tama Aiga matai* of A'ana, "transferred the Church" to the Aiga Taua'ana, a collective of "four important chiefly titles of the village Falelatai."[279]

This "transfer" was the physical relocation of the chapel originally in Matamatanonofo to the lands of the Aiga Taua'ana. The motive behind Tuimaleali'ifano's decision in 1838 was the growth of the congregation, for he felt that such progress wasn't realized in Matamatanonofo. This intentional relocation of the chapel and therefore, the LMS facility, is Tuimalealiifano's recognition of how location has a sense of importance in Samoan customs. With the church now on the land and under the care of Aiga Taua'ana, the increase of membership is possible, for in Falelatai, a unique customary practice known as *Afioga Tutasi* ensured the obedience of the *nu'u.*[280]

Chapels, local schools, and mission dwellings were usually located on *matū palapala* granted by the earliest converts and their *āiga*. But changes like the example of the chapel from Matamatanonofo to the Aiga Taua'ana lands would begin to take place throughout *nu'u* across Samoa. The 'village-church' model was beginning to come into focus as Samoan graduates from the seminary at Malua became available for labors in the *nu'u.*

In 1854, Samoan teachers "were paid by the villages in which they served," and "since the operations of the entire village contributed to the salary of the native teacher it elevated their status within the village."[281] The idea that *matai* and *āiga,* and *nu'u* and *fono* of LMS congregants in

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[279] Mafua, "A History of CCCS Matautu," 18.

[280] See Morgan Tuimaleali'ifano, "'Aia Tatau and Afioga Tutasi: 'Aiga versus Tama a 'Aiga: Manipulation of Old and New Practices: An MP for Falelatai and Samatau in Samoa's 2001 Elections," *Journal of Pacific History,* no. 3 (2001): 319. "Once village council decisions are made, they are intoned censoriously as the *afioga tutasi* (council decree). They are deemed irreversible and any attempt to undermine council authority results in banishment. Two forms of banishment are recognized. In the first form, detractors are cut off from participation in local governance but are allowed to remain on their land and in their house. The second form is more serious and is commonly known as *ati ma le lau* , meaning family dislocation from the village…"

[281] Tuiai, "The CCCS, 1962 – 2002," 26-27.

nu'u were now collectively responsible for the salary and well-being of their teacher capitalized on 'inter-village' rivalries, as *nu'u* began to compete in who could provide the best care possible for their teacher. Between 1854 and 1862, "Samoan teachers under the roof of missionaries' instructions" stationed at individual *nu'u* to conduct the mission's education strategies. [282] And by 1862, the European missionaries recognized the effectiveness in the 'native agency,' and "began to leave the field."[283] The effectiveness of having a Samoan teacher in each *nu'u* was due to the respect that such a move granted to the autonomy of *nu'u.* This was the mission officially adapting into the Samoan norms. The movement of the LMS to assign each nu'u with a 'permanent' teacher "led on naturally to the development of village churches with a considerable degree of autonomy, watched over by an ordained indigenous pastorate."[284] Aukilani Tuiai is most accurate in describing the organizational structure of the local *nu'u* church:

> As a representative of God, the pastor status was more ancient and therefore higher than *alii* titles. In this way the pastor's status not only paralleled but exceeded the status of the *alii* and *tulāfale* of the village. The *alii* and *tulafale* in their turn became involved with the church by becoming lay preachers and deacons of the church….
>
> The significance of the church identifying with the village is that the emergent CCCS was itself regarded as a 'village.' Village dynamics would unconsciously be incorporated in the operation and structure of the CCCS. Features of the villages such as the emphasis on community rather than the individual were also copied by the CCCS. Respect for the *matai* and the significance of the *fono* found corresponding parallels in the reverence for the pastor and the prominence of committee meetings.[285]

The LMS prioritizing the adjusting of their strategy to focus on the local *nu'u* signalled the beginning of a truly Samoan church. A Church fashioned accordingly with the institution that the Samoan is most familiar with – the *nu'u.* And just as this change was taking place, the placement

[282] Toalima, "Feagaiga and Taxation," 78.

[283] Toalima, "Feagaiga and Taxation," 78.

[284] Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'asāmoa," 194.

[285] Tuiai, "The CCCS, 1962 – 2002," 40-41.

of local churches became a matter of deliberation for the *nu'u* congregations. The LMS chapels/churches would be physically relocated as high-ranking *matai* of respective *fono's* stepped in to provide space for the LMS, placing the facilities on the culturally significant lands of the *nu'u*. In other instances, churches would be moved after a Church *fono* came to a consensus, a decision that usually required much deliberation if it was not on the land of important *matai* of a *nu'u.* The relocation of chapels/church buildings within the *nu'u* was a means for *nu'u* to reflect the significance of the LMS Church from a cultural standpoint. This movement also shows that the original lands gifted for this purpose was temporal.

3.4.1 Iva

People from the *nu'u* of Iva, situated in Fa'asaleleaga, were among the earliest Samoan converts of the LMS mission. Within the first decade of the LMS mission in Samoa, John Williams departed with a group of Samoans in 1839 on what would be his last missionary journey. Among the group of Samoan men were two individuals from Iva by the names of Mose and Filipo.[286] Considering the allocation of land for LMS chapels happening within the earliest stage of the mission, it is most probable that Iva also had a *matai* and *āiga* who had allocated land for the same. However, before the turn of the century, Iva had been conducting worship in a *fale tele* on land allocated by descendants of the early converts. The land granted as *matū palapala* for the facility was situated on a border of two *āiga* lands:

> This part of the village is where two sections of land called Poutavai and Tuanofoaga meet…The land Poutavai belongs to the extended family of Sā Sevē…one of the tulafale or orators in Iva. Tuanofoaga…belongs to the Sā Avea, one of the branches of the Tofilau family.[287]

The situation of the original chapel at Iva is a unique one. As noted in previous sections, the early converts that gifted land for chapels did so on land under the authority of a single *matai*

[286] Fauolo, "Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i," 69.

[287] Vaega Magele, "A History of the Construction of the CCCS Church Building in Iva from 1905 – 1913," (BTh thesis, Malua Theological College, 2017), 8.

and *āiga.* However, this is not the case for the worship space allocated to the LMS in Iva before the turn of the century. The facility occupying the land of two separate *matai* and *āiga* hints to a possibility of a *matai* Seve and Tofilau being the first Christian converts in Iva.[288] But it also has a relational meaning from a cultural standpoint. The subtle implication of the facility's location on these two lands can also imply a commitment of both families to equally provide and serve the LMS. There is intentionality behind the gifting of this space to the mission, it is not a random apportionment.

The obvious alternative interpretation of the placement is a matter of status. If both *āiga* were the early converts who wished to provide space for the LMS, then the LMS occupying one side over the other would show that one *āiga* was more committed to the LMS cause than the next. If the LMS facility was on one location, then the owners of that land were more closely associated with the mission. However, the location of the facility is most likely a sign of equal commitment to the cause, for the gifting of land by both respective *āiga* to host one facility theologically points to a meaning that states that the Christian God now occupies both spaces simultaneously.

As the congregation grew, the need for a new facility became a priority for the parish at Iva, and after deliberation, it was decided that the new facility required a new location.[289] Leauanae Timani and Leauanae Amani, holders of the *matai* title Leauanae, offered a location on the premises of their *malae* and *tulaga maota* known as Faleloa in 1905.[290] The matai Leauanae has an important role in the institution of *nu'u* politics:

> The title is also referred to as the *ao* or head of all the *tulafale* or orators of Iva…Leauanae is also the one who represents the village to the Fono a le Itumalo or District Council at Safotulafai.[291]

Just as important as Leauanae's role in Iva is the status of Faleloa within the landscape of the *nu'u:*

[288] Magele, "A History of the Construction of the CCCS Church Building in Iva," 8.

[289] Magele, "A History of the Construction of the CCCS Church Building in Iva," 10.

[290] Magele, "A History of the Construction of the CCCS Church Building in Iva," 10.

[291] Magele, "A History of the Construction of the CCCS Church Building in Iva," 12.

> Traditionally, the *malaefono* is used when the whole village meets including the sub-village of Vaiafai.[292]

The move from the original space of the chapel to the land of Faleloa was approved by the congregation of Iva. The shift resonates with the customs and practices of the *nu'u,* whose political norm involved the *fono* meeting regularly at Faleloa. By the time of this decision, the permanent alienation of Samoan land had officially been deemed illegal, although cases regarding the transfer of land ownership from deals made before 1879 were still being processed. The land of Tofilau and Seve, as well as the land at Faleloa had been dedicated for one sole purpose, the erection of a LMS worship facility. And therefore, since the facility at Poutavai and Tuanofoaga was no longer needed for this purpose, the land reverted to its traditional owners.

Matū palapala was now in effect at Faleloa. The voluntary offer by the Leauanae *matai* was made in the context of the discussion of a new church building. The assumption then, is that the land gifted is strictly for that purpose. So, if the church is no longer of use, and the congregation in their deliberation decide another church was to be built on another land, then the conditions of the granting of Faleloa is to be interpreted as terminated.

Another important cultural aspect to note is that the removal of the facility from the first land and the building of a new one on Falelo*a* was subject to the approval or rejection of the congregation. In the mission's early days, Tagaloa in Lalomalava was banished for his allocation of personal space to the mission, even though he probably had the authority to do so with the approval of his *āiga*. And in the case of the building at Faleloa, the *fono* or in this case, the parish, held the final say in accepting the placement of the LMS facility within the *nu'u.* The parish too has a say in whether they decide to move their worship facility again. This reflects a common understanding of the temporality of land allotted to the LMS.

Faleloa like the examples throughout this chapter show that *matū palapala* is a gift that is temporal. But the temporal offer entails that so long as the land is useful, the possessor shall use it. Secondly, the land is gifted for a specific purpose. This is a note to bear in mind. The Leauanae's gifted the land for a church building, not a mission dwelling or a school. Therefore, land usage/purpose is also a condition of *matū palapala*. The shift to Faleloa aligns with a trend that

[292] Magele, "A History of the Construction of the CCCS Church Building in Iva," 11.

saw important *matai* in *nu'u* granting *matū palapala* for the erection of LMS facilities. A trend that placed the LMS facility within land that also had significance within the *nu'u,* therefore serving as symbol of the *nu'us* reverence for God and the LMS.

3.4.2 Toamua

The first Samoan teacher and eventually *faifeau* assigned to the *nu'u* of Toamua on the island of Upolu was a Samoan named Paulo.[293] Paulo is credited as being involved in the building of the first chapel in Toamua, which was completed in 1842.[294] On the same grounds, the second chapel was erected in 1881, and was in use until 1915.[295] No evidence exists to identify the original owners of the land that was granted in Toamua for the erection of these first two churches, and the lack of a title or deed for the CCCS today regarding a land offered for the mission between 1842 and 1915 suggests that the land was *matū palapala* granted for the erection of a chapel.

However, an entirely separate piece of land was gifted to the LMS for the purpose of erecting a church building for the *nu'u* in 1915. Pa'apa'a Sapolu, former reverend of Toamua between 1958 and 1970, provided a historical account regarding the project that was commenced in 1916. According to this account, the congregation in the *nu'u* came to a consensus that a new facility was needed, as well as a new location. After deliberation of the important *matai* of the *nu'u* who were members of the LMS congregation, a decision was made to request land belonging to the āiga of the matai Palusalue:

> *O Matai sa taupulea le Falesa lenei: Ulu Lemuelu, Ale Nuusolia, Le 'A'ai Paiē, Faaitu Ulua, Pepe Aviata, Palu Pama, Manu'a Tuātau, Inifi Sola, Vaaulu Farao, Atanoa Si'u, Tuiolemū, Vaeila Pua'atunu, ma Salesa le Faifeau…O le fasi eleele o le aiga o sā Palū, na faatagi i ai le Nuu. Sa talia lelei e Simona ma lona uso o Pānoa, auā ua maliu Palu.* [296]

[293] Fauolo, "Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i," 642.

[294] Fauolo, "Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i," 642. See also, *O le Sulu Samoa,* Iuni 1969.

[295] *O le Sulu Samoa,* Iuni 1969

[296] *O le Sulu Samoa,* Iuni 1969

Translation:

The *matai* that planned this Church building were: Ulu Lemuelu, Ale Nuusolia, Le'A'ai Paiē, Faaitu Ulua, Pepe Aviata, Palu Pama, Manu'a Tuātau, Inifi Sola, Vaaulu Farao, Atanoa Si'u, Tuiolemū, Vaeila Pua'atunu, and the minister Salesa…The *nu'u* requested a parcel of land belonging to the Palū *āiga.* The request was accepted by Simona and his brother Pānoa since Palu died.[297]

Considering the landscape of Toamua, one of the key reasons for the request of Palū land is its central location in the *nu'u.* The paramount *matai* of Toamua, who like Leauanae of Iva and Safotulafai, have a voice and significant role in the *ītūmālō,* are Ale and Ulu – both represented in the deliberations of the church project.[298] However, the *āiga* estates of these matai are on outermost part of the *nu'u,* with Ale bordering the *nu'u* Saina and Ulu bordering the *nu'u* Faleula. The center between these borders, are the estates of Palusalue. The criterion behind the request is most likely a matter of location, and theologically, the congregation's decision to seek this central location is a symbol of centering God within the *nu'u.*

In the case of the Palū *āiga*'s gift, the land was requested by the *nu'u,* not voluntarily offered in the deliberation. However, Simona and Pānoa accepted the request of the *nu'u* with the condition that the land gifted was for the purpose of erecting an LMS church for Toamua. That is the element of *matū palapala* associated with the land granted by the *āiga.* It is an *matū palapala* not only to the LMS, but to the *nu'u.* Since the opening of this building on the land of Palu in 1922, Toamua has rebuilt their church building multiple different times on the same parcel of land.

3.4.3 The Trend

Many church buildings/chapel sites in the past and present stood and/or stand on *matū palapala* lands. The clearest condition of these gifts is that they were offered to the LMS and *nu'u* for the erection of churches. Iva and Toamua are not rare examples of this practice, for it was and

[297] English translation provided by author.

[298] Avataeao Junior Ulu, "Pule: Development Policy Sovereignty in Samoa," (M.DS thesis, Victoria University, 2013), 46.

is common. When congregations grow and land is needed for an LMS facility, *matai* and *āiga* are more than willing to assist through offering their lands for the cause. But these gifts are usually given to the mission and the Church for a specified purpose – the building of a church, or minister's residency.

Other examples include the Malietoa āiga at Malie, offering Vaopipi*,* the *tulaga maota* of the Malietoa *āiga,* to erect a church in 1929 when the former church building was too close to the government road, and plans for a new *nu'u* infrastructure were being discussed.[299] Or this historical account provided by Oka Fauolo of the LMS at Salelologa:

> *Na aumai e Papalii Seiuli Faaletonu le lotu mai Sapapalii, ona faatu lea i Papaloa, i le nofoaga o lo o susu ai Papalii ma Seiuli. Ua alua'i gasologa o tausaga, ua toe faatu ai e Seiuli ma le Ekalesia Katoliko Roma i ona eleele. Ona toe sii mai lea e Asomua Pita le lotu ma faatu le uluai falesa i Avegava…Ua gasolo tausaga a ua manatu Papalii ua mamao tele le falesa. Ona finagalo lea o Muagututia Tautele ma Muagututia Sea e ave i le ogatotonu o le pitonuu. Ona toe faatu lea o le falesa lona lua i Lautala o le fanua o Muagututia e lata i le sami…*[300]
>
> Translation:
> Papalii Seiuli Faaletonu brought the religion from Sapapalii and established it at Papaloa, the residency of Papalii and Seiuli. After several years, Seiuli established the Roman Catholic Church on his land. Then Asomua Pita relocated the Church and established the first Church (building) in Avegava. Several years after Papalii thought that the Church was too far. Then Muagututia Tautele and Muagututia Sea decided to relocate it at the center of the *pitonu'u.* The second church was built there in Lautala on Muagututia's land near the sea.[301]

These lands were gifted to the LMS for a specific purpose – the building of chapels/churches. And therefore, *matū palapala* ends when it is no longer in use for the church

[299] Fauolo, "Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i," 652.

[300] Fauolo, "Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i," 660.

[301] English translation provided by author.

building. The ownership reverts to the original owners, and the LMS space in the *nu'u* is relocated in the process.

3.5 Summary

From the outset of the LMS mission in Samoa, the need for land was evident, as the mission desired to have spaces for worship and residency. Responding to these needs, Samoans immediately offered the mission land to fulfil such requests. From the Samoan perspective, the reason for land-usage was clear, and therefore *matai* and *āiga* gifted parcels on their premises for the cause. The terms and conditions of the gifts were clear on the part of the Samoans and arguably the Tahitian teachers as well. Land belonged to *matai* and *āiga, nu'u* and *fono,* and these pieces had been granted for the temporal use of the mission, within the parameters of the desired reasons for this space.

As the mission gained momentum, Samoans allocated and designated land for the erecting of chapels to mirror and practice what they had learned from Sapapali'i. As far as they were concerned, the lands that they dedicated for the LMS were simply exclusive spaces that they could host the missionaries at. However, with the arrival of the European missionaries in 1836, a different understanding of these properties came into light.

Although the white missionaries were allocated funds from the Directors for building dwelling houses and 'purchasing' land, these supposed 'exchanges' were incomprehensible for the Samoans, who had no prior exposure to the concept of land alienation. Samoans accepted whatever they were gifted under the notion that these were either gifts of gratitude for the gifted land, or an exchange to give up parcels for temporal use.

The wars happening throughout the island suggested that Samoans never viewed lands granted to the mission as an official transfer of ownership. This was evident in their destruction of "mission property" during wars. Considering that in the 1840's onwards, every *nu'u* had an LMS chapel, the acts of war are evidence that Samoans did not view these exclusive spaces as the permanent properties of the mission. Missionaries, probably due to the lack of cultural understanding, maintained the position that these chapels and dwelling houses that they built as well as the lands that they stood on were properties of the LMS.

The inability of some of these missionaries to attain 'titles and deeds' for these lands are exceptions to the above point. Considering the relationship of someone like Stair to the paramount *matai* Tuimaleali'ifano, it appears that a few missionaries understood Samoan customary land framework from the beginning.

As the LMS began to adopt a more culturally sensitive strategy when they transitioned from the 'mission station' method to the 'village church' model, the shaping of the Samoan Church were coming into fruition. And at the same time, the practice of gifting *matū palapala* for specified purposes such as building churches continued well into the turn of the century.

The assumed truth from the perspective of Samoans regarding land is that it is inalienable. However, it can be granted for the temporal use of others as a gift if the reason for usage is specified. This is the reason why Samoans willingly gave their land – the proposed usage was clear, and in the case where it was no longer of use, it could be redistributed to fulfil any other necessary *āiga* or *nu'u* purposes. However, well into the 1900's, the LMS missionaries were not in a mutual understanding.

Chapter 4
Conclusion: *Pule*

4.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights and discusses some key findings from the research, considering the concept of *pule* – authority and/ownership – over the gifted lands. This chapter also provides a short summary regarding the research. But firstly, the thesis question - What is the historical root of disputes regarding lands gifted to the LMS Samoa? – must be answered.

4.2 The Root of Disputes Regarding Lands Gifted to the LMS Samoa

The last two chapters established the customary framework that was in play when Samoans gifted lands to the LMS. *Matū palapala* implied the gifting of a land for a temporary use, usually for a specified purpose. The expectation for the Samoan was that once it was no longer of use for the noted purpose, then authority of the land reverts to the traditional owners. On the other hand, *igagatō* was the gifting of land by Samoans with the understanding that the authority is also permanently transferred. Important to note, these are the means in which land was gifted. The point in clarifying the 'gift' component is to highlight that Samoans rarely "sold" customary land to the LMS before 1889. And if there was, from the LMS perspective, an exchange of goods for the permanent authority of land, then odds are the Samoans did not interpret the 'exchange' considering that line of thinking.

The LMS on the other hand, understood land being a commodity, something that could be purchased and owned. The LMS had a subtle disposition regarding owning property in the name of the LMS. They associated the buying of property in Samoa with helping the Mission maintain a presence in the islands. Buying property in the name of the LMS was a necessary means of ensuring the Mission's longevity in the islands. A sheer lack of cultural understanding on the part of the missionaries made them assume that the Samoans understood that land could be bought, and therefore the goods that the Mission gave to the Samoans was granted with the understanding that the land would then belong to the Mission.

These conflicting worldviews regarding land is the historical root of the land disputes that occasionally arise against the Church regarding lands that were gifted to Her. The Europeans and the Samoans were not on the same accord on the matter. One entity understood that they gifted land for free, with a term and condition attached, and the money or goods they received from the mission was interpreted as tokens of gratitude. The other considered the Samoans accepting of money and material goods as a sign of them agreeing to transfer their rights to the land to the purchaser. At the heart of the issue is a lack of cultural understanding on both parties. The historical root of disputes over gifted land, is a matter of the missionaries and the Samoans not understanding what the other side of the party was agreeing to.

The following sections give a brief historical account about the movements taken by the LMS to register these formerly customary lands as free-hold land. Then the researcher provides some key findings from the research, highlighting potential means of addressing the thesis problem.

4.3 A Brief History of the Registrations

Mission Property (1830 – 1888)

One of the earliest observations noted by the missionaries about Samoan land is that "all land is appropriated, to the very summit of the mountains."[302] Every square inch of land had a designated owner, *āiga, nu'u, or ītūmālō.* When a group of European missionaries arrived in Samoa in 1836 to support and grow the work set forth by the Tahitian teachers left behind by Williams in years prior, most *nu'u* had a *matai* and *āiga,* usually the first LMS Christian converts from this *nu'u*, that had gifted land for LMS chapels. The mission stations of which the missionaries were assigned upon their arrival already had space for the LMS, and on those allotted premises the missionaries built their dwellings and school space. The missionaries understanding was that house and facilities built for the LMS purpose, even on land gifted by *matai* and *āiga* and/or *nu'u* and *fono,* was automatically the property of the mission:

> …It is further our opinion that the houses of our respective stations should be considered the property of the Society and not of any individual missionary as in the event of his

[302] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, March 30 1840."

> connection with the Society being dissolved, the house and land, in connection with his station, might if sold, fall into the hands of parties opposed to our mission and our work. If however an extra allowance be made by the Directors for house building, it will not only free us from many difficulties but secure to the Society all the houses as mission property.[303]

The LMS had allocated funds for the building of mission houses, and in some instances, the missionaries built the dwellings at their own expense. Funds were dispersed to missionaries for both the house and land that the property was built on, but as discussed in the first chapter, the Samoans had no previous experience with permanent alienation. This would mean that whatever goods the missionaries thought they had exchanged for land with Samoans, was most likely interpreted as a gift by the Samoans. Furthermore, the other alternative understanding of such exchange would have been land "use-rights were given, service to the giver was provided in return," but a permanent alienation was not at all considered by Samoans.[304] However, the missionaries understanding of private property, land ownership, and the sale of land persisted.

The LMS SDC saw an issue with Stair not having a title for the land of his mission dwelling in Leulumoega. It is most probable that the lack of a title for Leulumoega is because Stair, who had close contacts with Tuimalealiifano, acknowledged that the land was free and meant to be a temporal space for residence. Another similar case is that of the Missionary George Drummond, who was assigned to Falealupo in 1841.

Drummond's assignment was to "commence a new station" there.[305] Like the rest of the cases mentioned earlier, Drummond was alotted land by *matai* for temporary usage for his dwelling. However, when Drummond was removed from Falealupo in 1844, he requested through the LMS SDC that the Directors of the Society grant him £50 to build a house in Saoluafata just as he had in Falealupo. The house in Falealupo, according to the mission, was now under their authority, and they granted the use of the house as a dwelling for the teachers and a classroom. However, they also tasked Drummond with transferring the house and land to the LMS.[306]

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[303] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, 12th & 13th June 1846."

[304] Meleisea and Penelope Schoeffel, "Land, Custom and History in Sāmoa," 23.

[305] Sibree, *A Register of Missionaries, Deputations,* 47.

[306] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, 5th & 6th November 1845."

The request for memorandums and written proof of ownership shows the desire of the SDC to build on its land portfolios in Samoa. The goal was to eliminate any potential for subsequent disputes with the locals. Furthermore, the SDC desired to maintain those grounds for future mission purposes. The goal was to ensure that the land and houses were legally bound to the mission, therefore, no other rival entity could lay claim over it.
By 1845, the skills of reading and writing – literacy – had already been practiced in Samoa. The schools in local *nu'u* were very effective in promoting literacy. However, the idea of the 'signing over' of authority to land was arguably incomprehensible. Therefore, any agreement regarding the transferring of authority of land before 1889 must be scrutinized considering the Samoan framework of land gifting.

George Turner's observation about the enthusiasm of people who were willing to offer their lands freely for the Mission seminary literally speaks to the attitude of Samoans in relation to the Mission in the 1840's. However, Turner's decision not to take them up on the offer, (even though he and the LMS technically received Malua for free), shows the inherent capitalism that is embedded in the average European of the time. What's at stake, at least from the missionary's standpoint, is ownership and authority. To take the "free" offer would subject the mission to the authority of the donor. But if they could 'purchase' the property, then the LMS only answers to itself.

The problem with this, as reiterated throughout this thesis, is that Samoans never comprehended being able to relinquish their permanent authority of land in a transaction during that period. Yet the missionaries, likely unaware of the Samoan perspective of land ownership and land gifting, continued with the signing of memorandums and agreements from the missionaries throughout the stations. The proof of transactions would be deposited in a "box" and kept as proof that the lands now belonged to the Directors of the LMS.[307] This was the norm for the missionaries when they were allocated funds to 'purchase' land. They retained the memorandum, titles, and deeds. Such actions would prove beneficial for the Mission by 1889.

[307] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, 3rd 4th & 6th December 1848." – The recorded data for the Malua purchase, 'two plots of land and a house,' was 'deposited in a box.'; LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, 5th & 6th November 1845." – memorandum for Falealupo, Drummond – deposited in the 'general box.'

Registering Pule (1890 – 1930)

All European claims to land were once again subject to disputes after the 1889 Berlin Act came into effect in Samoa. In 1889, a meeting between the United States of America, Germany and Great Britain adjourned with a pledge to maintain neutrality in Samoa, and "established the principle of prohibiting the sale of Samoan land to foreigners and of restricting leaseholds."[308] By then, the concept of alienation was understood by Samoans, especially those who unfortunately lost their lands when 'sales' that were recorded during Samoa's civil war years were deemed valid by the 'big three' foreign powers. The new law required the submission of European claims to land as the group that had oversight investigated evidence of these claims. This meant that even after Matiu defended the *igagatō* gifted to the LMS, they once again had to submit their claim to Malua. The LMS was vocal about their Samoan constituency being involved with the process, encouraging the people to prioritize making time to meet with the settlement officers to protect their customary land through their *Sulu Samoa* magazine.[309]

The fact that the LMS used its media platform to inform their followers of such a significant occasion hint to the concern that the missionaries had for Samoans and the protection of their land. Ironically, the LMS was also among the foreign entities in the race to secure the Mission's land estates.[310] In their endeavors, the obvious example of *igagatō,* Malua and Tofuola, was uncontested. The court case of 1874 saw a descendant of Matiu confirm the seminary's rightful place, 'converged and appointed' by Matiu and members of the *fono* thirty years prior. The no response to the 1893 investigation also signifies an understanding that carried on another two decades later.

The LMS would continue the process of confirming and validating their ownership of the lands in their folio, but not all their claims were successful. Evidence suggesting the locals understood the terms of permanent alienation, as well as the documents such as the memorandums used by the SDC, were all considered in the commissions granting of titles and deeds. At the turn of the century, Samoa became a protectorate of Germany. The Mission had to navigate Samoa with a new colonial power at the helm of governance.

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[308] Peter Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule: A Study in the Meaning of Colonial Resistance* (Acton: Australian National University, 2016), 25.

[309] *O Le Sulu Samoa*, Aokuso 1894, 16.

[310] *Samoa Weekly Herald,* vol. 1, issue 13, (18 February 1893): 2

One of the earliest priorities of the SDC during Germany's occupation of Samoa was transferring their land to the authority of the London Missionary Society Corporation, an order from the Directors in London.[311] Unfortunately, lands could not be transferred to such an institution during German Samoa, and therefore the Mission had nominated James Sibree, John William Hills, and John Marriot to hold the land in their name until the registration of the titles under the Society was possible.[312] Such a plan almost backfired in the 1920's, when land was still registered under these individuals but they were no longer in Samoa. Fortunately, the LMS perused their Power of Attorney, successfully enabling the transfer of the lands to the London Missionary Society or the London Missionary Society Corporation.

Most of the land on which the chapels/church buildings of the LMS remained customary land; whereas some of the original chapel locations, mission dwellings and schools, were able to be confirmed as free-hold land and official property of the Mission between 1889 and 1930. These free-hold lands include Feletoa in Apai – gifted permanently to the LMS by Tuilaepa Esekia - a descendant of Tuilaepa Matetau, in 1881 as the land in which the Apai Church still stands.[313] Or Nu'uausala at Leulumoega – former home of Stair and the Printing Press.

At the local *nu'u* level, the LMS was able to register some of the chapel locations as free-hold land. Some of these lands were signed over to the Church before 1889, and others were offered by *matai* and *āiga* for permanent possession of the LMS through a deed of gift. Aiono from Fasitoouta gave a piece of his land for the erection of a chapel. This parcel was gifted to the LMS through a deed of gift in 1897; however, after years of operation, the congregation of Fasitoouta agreed to relocate their church building in 1903.[314] However, some of these supposed offering of land as gifts to the LMS are deemed problematic because of issues with the signatory.

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[311] LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes 21st & 26th May 1900."

[312] LMS, "Samoa District Committee, August 29 1904."

[313] Faulalo Kennar, "A History of the Apai Manono CCCS," 36-37. See also, EFKS Ofisa o Fanua ma Fale, *Tuilaepa and othrs to Thomas Heath, Manono.*

[314] FD Baxter Esq to Rev A Hough, July 10, 1923, *London Missionary Society, Samoan District: Administrative records,* National Library of New Zealand, Micro-MS-Coll-08-1278-4; LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, May 12th-18th, 1903."

4.4 Titles, Deeds, and Memorandums as Evidence of *Pule*

Beyond the cultural misunderstanding that this research asserts to be the root of land disputes, the signatory to deeds pre-dating 1889 deserve considerable attention. For example, a member of the *āiga* at Paepaelauniu, (as discussed in Chapter 1), stated "Seu had no right to gift the land in 1888 to the LMS." And considering that he was the sole signatory and not the holder of the I'aulualo title, the circumstance surrounding the validity of such a document is questionable. Furthermore, issues of fairness in his sole signing away of the land come to mind. Take for instance, when a LMS Samoa deacon, Lefau of Vailele, decided to grant his *āiga* land as a *igagatō* to the Church:

> *Ia latou susuga a le 'Au Ta'ita'i,*
> *Susuga e, ua 'ou tusi atu ma le āva tele e tatau ai, e faapea, e faaali atu i o outou luma lo'u taofi. O lo'o i ai le fasi fanua e igoa o Fanuafou i Vailele, o lo'o nofo ai nei le Faifeau. Ua 'ou loto malie e tu'uina atu ma mea alofa (Taulaga) mo le Ekalesia Samoa (LMS) ia avea ma nofoaga tumau o faifeau e āumai o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga i lenei nu'u o Vailele…*[315]
>
> Translation:
> To you honorable leaders,
> Sirs, I humbly write to let you all know my opinion. There is a parcel of land named Fanuafou in Vailele, there the minister resides. I willingly offer it as a gift for the Ekalesia Samoa (LMS) to be a permanent residence for the ministers that are brought to the Congregational Church of this village Vailele.[316]

Lefau was likely a devout LMS member. The attitude and desire to offer resources, time, funds, and oneself is characteristics of commitment to the faith. Lefau's attitude and purpose is

[315] Lefau to 'Au Ta'ita'i, November 1, 1934, *London Missionary Society, Samoan District: Administrative Records*, National Library of New Zealand, Micro-MS-Coll-08-1278-2.

[316] English translation provided by author.

desirable and reflects his reverence for both the Church and the ministers. However, he suddenly had a change of heart:

> *I lana susuga Misi Taleni,*
> *Susuga e….O loo i ai lo'u fanua i Vailele, o i ai le fale o le Faifeau, sa ou tuuina atu e fai ma a'u taulaga mo le Lotu Lonetona Misionare Sosaiete. O lea fo'i ou te talosaga atu ai ma le faamaulalo tele ina ia talia ma le finagalo malie e le Sosaiete ina ia toe faafo'i mai ona o loo i ai fa'alavelave ua tutupu i totonu o le aiga ona o lena fanua; o loo i ai se tasi vaega o le aiga ua lē malie. Lefau.*[317]
>
> Translation:
> To honorable Missionary Taleni,
> Honorable…I have land at Vailele, where the minister's house is, I gave it as my offering to the London Missionary Society Church. I humbly pray that the Society willingly accepts to return it for the land has caused a disturbance in the family; there is a part of the family that are not content. Lefau.[318]

The case of Lefau presents how having only one signatory can be problematic in gifting land to the Church. One signature undermines the authority of other *suli* and *āiga* members. And it creates more questions revolving around why the *āiga* weren't involved in the offer. Lefau realized how important consulting *āiga* is after the fact that he signed the rights to the land over to the Samoan Church. However, as evident in his first letter, he understood what he had implied in the letter meant a permanent alienation, and it was an alienation he consented to.

In an unsigned copy of a letter dated June 12, 1935, the LMS sent the following response to Lefau:

> *…Ou te fia tusi atu i lau tofa i le mataupu ne e tusi mai ai…o le Fanua i Vailele. Ou te fia faasilasila atu i lau tofa, ua talia lau talosaga mulimuli ina ia toe talatala oe ma lou aiga,*

[317] Lefau to Misi Taleni, March 13, 1935, *London Missionary Society, Samoan District: Administrative Records*, National Library of New Zealand, Micro-MS-Coll-08-1278-2.

[318] English translation provided by author.

ae peitai, ua matou mafaufau pea i lou foai mai muamua…Ou te fia faamanatu atu, sa faia lena savali ma lena feagaiga ona o lou lava manatu. Sa foai mai le fanua i lau lava pule. Po o le aoga ea la ma savali pe leai?[319]

Translation:

I want to write to you regarding the subject you wrote to us about…the land at Vailele. I want to notify you, that your last request to deliberate with your family has been accepted, however, we are still considering your first offer…I want to remind you, that meeting and arrangement was your idea. You offered the land on your own authority. Is our meeting then pointless?[320]

Fortunately for Lefau, the LMS response was one of cultural sensitivity. Although there is understandable disappointment in Lefau on their part, the fact that they even considered granting Lefau his wish shows much consideration on the part of the mission. However, there are other examples of when such sensitivity was not afforded to Samoans who were also sole signatory that donated their *āiga* land to the mission. Petaia, an LMS minister from Faleasi'u in the 1920's, shared much disappointment over the white missionary that influenced his father's signing over of their *āiga* land – Asofana - in Faleasi'u. Writing to the LMS in 1927, Petaia stated:

…Ua o'u talosaga i au tou susuga e Au Faatonu, ona o le Fanua i le nuu o Faleasiu…o Asofana. Ua tusia le Feagaiga i le vā o le Sosaiete, ma lo'u tamā o Petaia i lenā fanua…O le upu a Petaia i lana fanau: Na ona avea le Feagaiga – O le faamamalu lava a le Sosaiete. Ia mamalu ai le Fanua i aso o taua o Samoa. O lenā lava le upu ma le mavaega a Petaia i lana fanau. O tausaga o le ututau o Samoa: 1869, 1870, 1871. O le taua lava ma le faaleagaina o Fanua…Ona alu ai lea o Petaia ia Misi Tana i Malua; Ia alofa ma se'i famamaluina lona Fanua i le mamalu o le Sosaiete, ma ia maua ni fu'a e iloga ai ua faamamaluina le Fanua e le Sosaiete. Sa talia e alii. Ua avane ni ie papae e fai ma fua, ma le upu a alii i Malua: E lelei pe a tusia se tusi ia tu ai le lima o Petaia, e fai ma faamaoniga

[319] LMS to Lefau, June 12, 1935, *London Missionary Society, Samoan District: Administrative Records*, National Library of New Zealand, Micro-MS-Coll-08-1278-2.

[320] English translation provided by author.

o le faamalu o le Sosaiete i lona fanua. I le ma lea, e ao ona fuatia le fanua i ona tuaoi…O le tausaga e 1872 na tusia ai lena pepa ma lenā tusi itu tasi, na o le Gagana faa Peretania, e aunoa ma se faaliliu faa Samoa, se'i faitau ai le Toeaina Samoa, ma manino ai ia te ia upu o lena tusi…Ua faia na mea uma…Ua uma ona o'u alu i le Kovana. O lana upu…O le iuga ua tatou maua, na te talia lava. E le afaina le faamau faailoga o le malō ua i le tusi pe a ua maua se iuga: Ia tuu ia te au le pule i le fanua, ma o'u fai ai le pule lelei mo le tulaga o le Fale Sā ma le mea e nofo ai le faifeau…O lenā le tagi ua o'u talosaga atu ai.[321]

Translation:

…I am requesting you honorable Directors, about the land in the *nu'u* Faleasiu…Asofana. There is a written agreement between the Society and my father Petaia regarding this land…My father told his children: He initiated an agreement – the protection of the Society. So that the land may be protected during the Samoa's days of war. That was Petaia's words and will to his children. The years of war in Samoa: 1869, 1870. 1871. Each war came with the destruction of land…Then Petaia went to Missionary Turner in Malua (and requested): Have mercy and protect his land with the Society's influence and bring flags to show that the land is protected by the Society. The men agreed. White cloth was brought as flags, and the Malua men said: It is appropriate for a letter to be written for Petaia to sign, as confirmation of the Society's protection of his land. Furthermore, the land must be surveyed to its borders…That letter was written in the year 1872 and that one-sided letter, only in English, was without a Samoan translation, for the Samoan elder to read and understand the contents of the letter…All of this was done…I already went to the Governor. His word…The decision we make, he will accept. The government seal on the letter doesn't matter if there is a decision: Grant me the *pule* of the land, and I will exercise good authority for a location of the church building and a place of residence for the minister…That is the help I am requesting.[322]

[321] Petaia to Misi Baka, December 21, 1927, *London Missionary Society, Samoan District: Administrative Records*, National Library of New Zealand, Micro-MS-Coll-08-1278-2.

[322] English translation provided by author.

According to Petaia's account, his father unknowingly relinquished his rights, and therefore by default the right of his descendants, to Asofana. In the days of war, even before the wars of 1869-1871, Malua was already viewed as its own *nu'u,* autonomous from the surrounding Saleimoa, and under the jurisdiction of the missionaries. This made Malua a haven – Samoans understood that the land had been permanently gifted to the LMS, and the boundaries were clear and concise. Faleasi'u is the first *nu'u* of A'ana that one encounters when going westward from the Tuamasaga. A'ana was often the battleground for wars as noted in the previous chapters, and therefore the people of A'ana would often seek refuge in Atua when their lands were pillaged and destroyed by enemies. Therefore, the fear of the older Petaia is reasonable. And his desire for the LMS protection reflects his utmost respect for the missionaries and his faith in God.

The allegations implied in the younger Petaia's letter is that his father was taken advantage of by the LMS. The older Petaia is probably among the generation that never understood land alienation. If these were the terms suggested in the document that he signed, then this is an example of kicking someone while their down: firstly, the elder did not understand English, which was the only language used by the document; and secondly, he did not understand alienation – therefore, even if the concept was presented in Samoan, he more than likely wouldn't have understood that the terms the document discussed. But regardless of Petaia's allegations, the only interpretation of the 1872 document was that the elder Petaia had agreed to the terms expressed as evident in his signature.

The use of written and signed agreements dated before 1889 as confirmation of an agreement for permanent alienation of land by the LMS must be reconsidered in the context of land laws, and the comprehension of land laws. It is most likely that the deed for the chapel at Fasitoouta gifted to the LMS by Aiono was done so with the understanding that permanent alienation was the condition. The situations of Petaia and that of Lefau also provides insight of the Samoan understanding regarding alienation in these distinct periods. Lefau, whose offer was made in the 1930's, had to renege his offer because his *āiga* most likely disagreed with the alienation of their land. But for the elder Petaia, the terms and conditions expressed in the document he signed was probably not even considered, it is most probable that he signed the document simply because he revered the LMS.

Furthermore, it is highly likely that he did not understand that permanent alienation of customary land was a real thing. The document he signed, according to his son, was simply

supposed to be a confirmation of the protection afforded his land by the Mission. Considering the Asofana example, there are concerns that arise relating to the memorandums signed by Samoans for the LMS before 1889 – including but not limited to – the land allotted for mission houses, stations, schools, and other LMS facilities – which were gifted by *matai* and *āiga.*

4.5 *Feagaiga and* Oral Tradition as Evidence of *Pule*

Important cultural information – such as *āiga* and *nu'u* histories, and genealogies – are passed down through *tala tuumumusu*, "the culture of whispers engaged by Samoan custodians when passing on a sacred knowledge."[323] Among the information passed by 'custodians' to their descendants are *feagaiga* that the custodians hope their future generations maintain.[324] Honoring ancestor's *feagaiga* with the LMS can be seen in the example of the Matiu *āiga.*

Between 1844 and 1848, Matiu gifted a total of 50 acres of land in Malua to the LMS.[325] This was the *igagatō* granted permanently to the Mission by Matiu with the witness and approval of the *matai* of Saleimoa. The court case against Pula in 1874, as well as the confirmation of Malua as European land in 1893 are indicative of the maintaining of the *feagaiga* passed down by Matiu Solomona to his ancestors.

Matiu Alapasa, grandson of Matiu Solomona, noted in 1980 that inheriting the Matiu *matai* title also meant that he had to "continue to hold the tradition of '*feagaiga*'" in reference to Malua.[326] *Feagaiga* applied in this sense, on the part of Matiu, seems to be the mutual recognition

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[323] Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, "Whispers and Vanities in Samoan Indigenous Religious Culture" (Paper presented at the World Parliament of Religions, Melbourne, Australia, 3 December 2009), 2.

[324] See Latai, "Covenant Keepers, 43-46: "The word *feagaiga* however from a Samoan epistemological viewpoint is more than just an agreement or contract, as it has a sacred element. The world itself comes from the word *feagai* which means to be opposite to another…to be opposed does not denote a state of agonistic conflict but rather of persons or parties being in a reciprocal or mutual status and valuation…Applied to social relations, the term *feagaiga* is a "covenant" directed at maintaining the state of harmony within kin and Samoan society as a whole." In this sections reference to *feagaiga*, it is used as a 'covenant directed at maintaining the state of harmony within kin and Samoan society as a whole' that is maintained by āiga and passed down to their descendants in oral tradition.

[325] See LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, July 26th 1844."; See also, LMS, "Samoa District Committee Minutes, December 3rd 4th & 6th 1848."; The first twenty-five acres of Malua were gifted in 1844, and the latter twenty-five in 1848.

[326] Lavasii, "To Supply Them With Knowledge," 59; See also, Enari, "A Christian Reflection on the Customary Land Tenure System," 66.

of the gift – that is, the Matiu āiga recognizing that the fifty-acres of Malua is no longer theirs, and the Church recognizing the those who gifted the land to the Mission. Tafesilafai Lavasii shares an interpretation of the gift as understood by Matiu Alapasa as well:

> It was an offering and a sacrifice of "not only the chiefs" but the family (extended family) for the work of "Jehovea and the Lotu." What the missionaries gave in return of their kindness were gifts.[327]

Speaking to an audience at the Exeter Hall in 1872 and highlighting the "great and ever-increasing importance" of Malua as an institution, Turner stated:

> We own by purchase in the name of the London Missionary Society about 120 acres of land, bushland, which we have brought under cultivation.[328]

From the original fifty acres gifted by Matiu, Turner records the expansion of the boundaries. The *feagaiga* between his ancestor and the LMS granted the original fifty acres 'close to the coast' as *igagatō;* however, according to Alapasa, an additional fifty acres inland was given as matū palapala – "for the missionaries and the college to work on till the population of his aiga or village, grew and needed" it.[329] Focusing on the first fifty acres, the *igagatō,* we see that Matiu Alapasa, two generations removed from the Matiu who gave the gift, was a custodian of the *feagaiga* passed on by his ancestors.

The time between Solomona and Alapasa is not a distant memory, for the *feagaiga* and *igagatō* as originally made by Solomona was still an oral tradition maintained by Alapasa. This example shows the gravity of *feagaiga* as alternative evidence for *pule.* The Matiu of 1844 relinquished his rights and therefore the rights of his *āiga* when he granted the Mission the land of Malua and Tofuola as *igagatō.* And oral tradition maintained this understanding as time passed.

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[327] Lavasii, "To Supply Them With Knowledge," 47.

[328] Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895, Vol. I* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 391.

[329] Enari, "A Christian Reflection on the Customary Land Tenure System," 66; Enari noted that Matiu Alapasa wanted to reclaim this latter fifty acres for his family, but the Church also responded that this was a part of the original gift granted by Matiu Solomona to the Mission.

Today, there are documents that serve as evidence of the permanent ownership of Malua – the first fifty acres and the rest of property 'purchased' by the LMS. However, the role of oral tradition ensured that – at least for the first fifty acres by the coast – the Matiu *āiga* maintained the *feagaiga* between their forefathers and the Church.

Unfortunately, oral tradition can easily be manipulated to fit a person's agenda and motives. Considering land disputes in today's context, nearly two centuries removed from when the LMS first arrived, confirming the validity of oral tradition is even harder. In the case of Matiu Alapasa, he was only two generations removed from his grandfather, the original donor of Malua. However today, Samoans are farther removed from those who initially gave land as gifts to the Mission. However, a reasonable consideration can be granted to a certain group of the descendants of traditional 'owners' who gifted lands to the Mission.

Since the time of those who gifted lands to the Mission, *āiga* have grown, many have spread across the islands and into the diaspora. Yet they are all *suli* to the *matai* title, and therefore members of the *āiga.* Therefore, regarding land used by the Church that is still under the 'customary land' category, they have a say in its usage. However, descendants and *suli* of the original donors still live on their *āiga* land in *nu'u* where their land used by the Church is.

Within this group of descendants, are those that have for successive generations since their land was gifted, lived on the same lands. This specific, and mostly limited group of individuals, are most likely the ones that are aware of the *feagaiga* attached to their lands on which Church facilities occupy. Therefore, they would also have credibility in understanding the original intent and understanding behind the offer. Although oral tradition can be subject to much redaction and misinterpretations, it is more probable that these individuals have more credibility than any documents used as evidence that precede 1889.

4.6 *"Na Foa'i Mo Le Lotu"* – A Broad Argument for *Pule*

The Church acquired her catalogue of land in two ways: firstly, it was 'purchased'[330]; and secondly, it was gifted. The oral tradition relating to the origins of lands gifted to the Church states

[330] Aside from the 'purchases' from Samoans claimed to have been done by Missionaries before 1889, the LMS did purchase land in Samoa from other foreigners and foreign entities, as well as the German and New Zealand

"*Na foa'i mo le Lotu,"* translated as "it was offered for the Church." This blanket statement is true regarding lands gifted to the Church, but it does not entail the specific details relating to the gift, as described in Chapters 2 and 3.

The general assumption made through this broad claim is that all the land that was gifted to the Church can be used as the Church pleases. However, the context in which lands were offered vary from case to case. Recalling the examples of the two Leauanae in Iva (1905) and Palusalue in Toamua (1915) in Chapter 2, the gift of land was granted with the understanding that it would be used for a church building. Therefore, the assumed belief is that if the congregation decide to relocate, the land on which the buildings stand revert to the authority of the Leauanae and Palusalue *āiga*.

"*Na foa'i mo le Lotu"* is only the first part of the story of lands gifted to the Church, not the whole story itself. The same can be said about the case studies analyzed in the earlier chapters. The common ground that they all share is "*na foa'i mo le Lotu,"* but the rest of the story requires a closer analyzation of its history – both written and oral – to uncover the latter part of the gift's truths.

4.7 An Inherited Concern: LMS Samoa 1923 & CCCS 2024

A growing concern of the Church is reflected in a minute from the KFE meeting:

> Many issues have occurred for many of the churches and parishioners because of lands on which their church and minister's residence and halls occupy. Is it reasonable to try to make the lands 'free hold' and register them with the MNRE to avoid any disputes with the newer generations of families that originally offered these lands but have converted?[331]

The minute identifies, indirectly and to an extent, the people that have aroused the disputes with the Church regarding lands used for Church facilities, as 'converts.' The subtle implication here is that so long as members of the *āiga* who gifted the land for the local church facilities are

governments; the Samoan Church and eventually, the CCCS, also purchased land(s) between the time of the independence of the CCCS from the LMS and today.

[331] See Chapter 1, Section 1.6

members of the Church, there will be land for the Church in the *nu'u.* However, a surge in conversion out of Samoa's three traditional mainline churches – the CCCS, the Samoan Methodist Church, and the Roman Catholic Church – has led to the visible increase of other denominational groups throughout local *nu'u.* Many of these churches also have a physical presence with chapels and halls in local *nu'u* as their adherents grant *matū palapala* and in some cases, *igagatō,* to incorporate these denominations into the *nu'u* landscape.

The concern expressed by the KFE assumes that as people join these different denominations, their upholding of the *feagaiga* between the Church and the original donors of the customary land may change at the expense of the Church. However, as previously expressed, understanding the catalyst of the gift brings the context of its terms and conditions to the forefront of understanding. Although the KFE minute specifies three facilities – the church, minister's house, and hall – it fails to recognize the gifted land in these contexts; therefore, making the general assumption that these lands "*na foa'i mo le Lotu."* Indeed, they were gifts to the *Lotu,* but they were most likely gifted with the understanding of what facility would stand in place.

Perhaps a foreshadowing of this KFE discussion, the Church's predecessor – the LMS Samoa Church – had the same concern just a little over a century ago:

> …However, although the church has been allowed to "squat" on the land with the consent of the owners the land has never been transferred to the Church and consequently it remains native land subject to native custom. The Society is now anxious to have these lands transferred to the London Missionary Society Corporation in order to avoid difficulties when pastors are removed from their charges or if a portion of the villagers for any reason leave the London Missionary Society to join some other Mission.[332]

The religious make-up of Samoa in 1923 and in 2024 are similar in that the Church and its predecessor had the most adherents in the islands. Although since 1923, the percentage of the country devoted to the Church have drastically declined, the Church still maintains its claim as having the most membership out of the other denominations. Yet even in 1923, there was a concern about how conversions out of the Church could affect Church lands and facilities. And such a

[332] FD Baxter Esq to Secretary London Missionary Society, Malua, July 10, 1923, *London Missionary Society, Samoan District: Administrative records,* National Library of New Zealand, Micro-MS-Coll-08-1278-4

concern led to the discussion of possibly transferring *āiga* lands and consequently, the *pule* of the parcel to the Society.

Further elaborating on the concern, FD Baxter – the LMS Samoa's solicitor - in describing his seeking of advice from the Crown Solicitor to help the LMS achieve their desire, wrote:

> We pointed out to him particularly the disputes which might arise if the majority of the adherents of a church through some petty dispute changed over to say the Methodist Mission. Both parties would try to retain possession of the church buildings leading to religious bitterness which might be felt throughout the Islands. Further the native owners of the land would practically control the life of the Church.[333]

Baxter's presentation of the possibilities is a matter of "what-if." However, he did acknowledge - with an aggressive undertone - the situation of the LMS Samoa Church during that time when he stated:

> …the church has been allowed to "squat" on the land with the consent of the owners the land…[334]

The imagery implied with the word "squat" – although silly – is indicative of the Europeans understanding the temporal nature of the gift. Even in noting that the land "remains native land subject to native custom" Baxter recognizes the autonomy of the *āiga* and *nu'u* to set the terms and conditions of the use of their lands. However, the fact that the facilities were willingly granted a parcel to be erected on, even before registration and transferring land to the Mission was an idea for Samoans, implies a sense of commitment, faith, and loyalty to the LMS.

4.8 Conclusion

The following subject matter was discussed at a KFE meeting earlier this year:

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[333] FD Baxter Esq to Secretary London Missionary Society, Malua, July 10, 1923.

[334] FD Baxter Esq to Secretary London Missionary Society, Malua, July 10, 1923.

Faamautuina o Fanua o Aulotu o loo tutu ai Falesa ma Fale o Faife'au. Sa'ili ina ia mautinoa po ua resitalaina. Fai e le Failautusi se tusi e faailoa ai le faamoemoe i Faife'au…

***I'uga**: Fai se tusi e faailoa ai i Faafeagaiga lea faamoemoe.*[335]

Translation:

Verifying the lands of parishes of which the church building and minister's house are located. Check and confirm if they are registered. The Secretary shall prepare a letter to notify the ministers of the intent.

Resolved: Prepare a letter to notify the resident ministers of the plan.[336]

The KFE's resolution reflects a move towards possibly transferring the status of these customary lands to freehold. The first step, outside of the dialogue within the KFE, is the notifying of the resident ministers.

Considering this research's findings, perhaps the next and most appropriate step would be the intentional involving of *matai* and *āiga* that own the land on which these facilities are: bringing them into the dialogue; collecting data from them regarding their perceptions and understanding of the *feagaiga,* if one was made, relayed to them by their forebearers; gaging the terms and conditions they believe are attached to the lands gifted by their ancestors; and garnering their beliefs and opinions about the institutional intent to transfer the lands status from 'customary' to 'freehold.'

Perhaps from such a dialogue, a mutual understanding can be forged between the Church as the ancestor of the LMS, and the people as *suli* and *āiga* of those who gifted the lands to the Church. Maybe then the complexities of *"na foa'i mo le Lotu"* will surface and reveal the hidden truths, providing an understanding of the ways in which the ancestors of the Church honored God, by giving the Mission the same lands God gifted them.

[335] Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa. "I'ugafono Komiti o Fe'au Eseese 26/03/24." 2024, 81.

[336] English translation provided by author.

The KFE has decided that lands gifted as *matū palapala* or *igagatō* – that have yet to be granted a free-hold title – must be surveyed within these coming years. Being that the permanent alienation of customary land is no longer permitted, the KFE has decided that to avoid any future misunderstandings between the Church and *āiga* and/or *nu'u*, the necessary action would be to initiate an agreement with the descendants of *donors* who offered their lands – lands which CCCS facilities currently occupy – and transfer these agreements onto long term leases.[337]

Although this move is an attempt by the KFE and the Church to prevent any disruptions that *āiga* and/or *nu'u* may cause for the local parishes regarding the facilities that occupy their customary land, or any activities the parish may conduct for that matter, it also signals a step away from the indigenous Samoan land tenures that afforded the Mission its footing in Samoa. Most of which the LMS considered 'property of the LMS' within the first century were 'freely given.' To this day, most of the land occupied by CCCS facilities are the same, they were 'freely given.' In other words, the introduction of the leasing concept unintentionally belittles the value and deters people from continuing the practices of *igagatō* and *matū palapala*. It is an attempt to hold *pule* (in a loose way of using the term) to the Church; however, from the researcher's position, it also removes the weight and value of the people's *taulaga* of offering land – or offering the source of life and what sustains it – for God and the ministry.

The KFE's decision, like the hopes of the LMS Samoa in 1923, is to ensure that the Church always has space in *nu'u* for the people. But as noted in this research, it appears that so long as there are people in the Church, there will always be space and land for the Church. Whether these lands are gifted as *matū palapala* or *igagatō,* or whether the only space is available is the *maota* of an *āiga* and *matai,* the point is there will always be a Samoan willing to commit their life, and therefore their land, to the cause of the Church.

The church building in Paepaelauniu Fa'ala was removed to Fatufa'asaga in the 1980's when the CCCS Fa'ala parish decided the shift was necessary. Today, the church building and minister's residence has been removed from Fatufa'asaga and now occupies a different land under the customary authority of another branch of the Lagaaia title and their *āiga*, a shift made by the CCCS Fa'ala when descendants of the *āiga* at Fatufa'asaga requested their land back.[338] Perhaps

[337] Loia Kolia, ordained minister of the CCCS and Commissioner of CCCS Lands and Buildings, interview by Fraser Tauaivale, September 11, 2024.

[338] Lualua Manila, interview by Fraser Tauaivale, September 10, 2024.

one way of interpreting the request of the descendants of Fatufa'asaga is that they have caused an inconvenience, or have reneged on the offer of their ancestors. However, such an interpretation does not leave room to celebrate the offer of the latter Lagaaia and his *āiga*, which shows that in the context of Samoa, the Church will never not have land or space in *nu'u* so long as they have a loyal and faithful commitment from the people. Such a fact does not downplay or undermine the concerns of the KFE; however, it simply brings into light the beauty of Samoan *taulaga* as evidence of their commitment to God and the Church.

Many of the lands Samoans gifted to the Mission before 1889 – *whether matū palapala or igagatō* – have found themselves in the Church's catalogue of 'freehold' lands. Whether they were intended to be permanent, or temporal offers no longer matter, for the title and deed have classified them as assets and property of the Church. However, their history gives us an insight into the connection between the Samoan ancestors and their lands, as well as their commitment to the Church.

Whether *matū palapala* or *igagatō*, in the historical context of the first century of the LMS in Samoa, the gifting of land speaks volumes to the people's love for God and the Gospel. A love that provided a temporal space so that the Mission and the Gospel can have a permanent place in Samoa. That is the hidden truth of *matū palapala* and *igagatō.* The *pule* of *matū palapala* is vested in *matai, āiga, fono,* and *nu'u.* But it is a *pule* that takes the backseat when God desires his workers to settle and gain ground in *nu'u. Igagatō* on the other hand is the obvious reflection of a desire to bring God into one's space; recognizing His *pule* and requesting His presence by one's side. That is the weight and value of the lands gifted by Samoans to the LMS. It is recognition that on the lands of Samoa, God will always be the *Pule.*

GLOSSARY

āiga	family
ali'i	a high chief
aualuma (o teine)	the collective of "sisters and daughters of the *fono* and *aumaga*" or "unmarried females" of a *nu'u*.[1]
aumaga/ aualuma o tane	the collective of untitled men in a family or village
fa'alupega	"a set of ceremonial greetings which are recited when the *fono* meets. It serves as a constitution and encapsulates, in a few phrases, the origin and rank of each constituent title of the *nu'u* and the order of precedence and ranking in the *fono.*"[2]
faiā	relation
Faifeau Samoa	an ordained minister/clergy of the LMS/CCCS
fale	house
faletele/faletalimālō	the "big house," or meeting place of an āiga and/or nu'u; also an āiga's guest house.
fanua	land
feagaiga	covenant
fono	village council
igagatō	land permanently gifted by *matai* and *āiga* and/or *fono* and *nu'u* to a non-*suli* or outsider
ītūmālō	district; an alliance of various *nu'u.*
malae	field; village greens; meeting ground
malaefono	traditional meeting grounds

[1] Erich Schultz, "The Most Important Principles of Samoan Family Law," 48.

[2] Malama Meleisea, "The Making of Modern Samoa," 20.

malosi o le nu'u	"strength of the village"; refers to the *aumaga* and/or *aualuma.*
maota	residential site
matai	chief
matū palapala	land gifted to a non-*suli* or outsider for temporary use
maumaga	plantation
nu'u	village; polity
palagi	European; white person
pule	authority
sā	sacred; ban.
suli	heir(s)
tautua	service
tofi	inheritance
tofiga	apportionment
tulafale	chief (orator)
tulagamaota	traditional residential site for *matai* title

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Appendix A: Interview with CCCS Gen Sec & Commissioner of Lands & Buildings

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Vice Principal: *Rev. Dr. Arthur Wulf*

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Interview

The following statements are recorded in the minutes of the General-Purpose Committee meeting held on August 2nd, 2023:

"Ua matauina e le Komiti o Galuega le tele o fanua o le Ekalesia o loo faigata lava le tulaga o loo ta'oto ai ona o aafiaga o le suia o foliga o aiga ma nuu mai le tulaga sa i ai anamua ina ua faia foa'i pe faatauina mai foi nei fanua."

"Popolega i le tele o Fanua o le Ekalesia: Ua mautinoa le tele o faafitauli ua tutupu mai i le tele o Ekalesia ma Aulotu ona o fanua o loo tutū ai falesā ma maota o Faafeagaiga ma fale o Aulotu. Pe lē alagatatau ona taumafai e fai ma fanua umia sa'oloto ma faapepaina i le MNRE ina ia fo'ia ai le toe lōtea e tupulaga fou o le tele o aiga na mua'i faia foa'i a ua liulotu."

1. Referring to the first quoted statement, can you elaborate on the phrase "o loo faigata lava le tulaga o loo ta'oto ai ona o aafiaga o le suia o foliga o aiga ma nuu mai le tulaga sa i ai anamua ina ua faia foa'i…"

2. Referring to the second quoted statement, can you elaborate and provide examples of "le tele o faafitauli ua tutupu mai."

3. In reference to “toe lōtea e tupulaga fou o le tele o aiga na mua’i faia foa’i a ua liulotu,” has this happened recently and in the history of the CCCS since its independence from the LMS?

4. What are some of the arguments presented by those that “lōtea” lands gifted to the Church?

The following is an excerpt from resolutions passed at the General Purpose Committee meeting held on March 26th, 2024:

“Faamautuina o Fanua o Aulotu o loo tutu ai Falesa ma Fale o Faife’au. Sa’ili ina ia mautinoa po ua resitalaina. Fai e le Failautusi se tusi e faailoa ai le faamoemoe i Faife’au…”

1. Referring to the above resolution, what is the Church’s “faamoemoe” as to be made known by the Secretary to the parish ministers?

2. What is the Church doing now with lands that are still customary lands, but are grounds on which church facilities are built (church building, ministers house, hall)?

3. Has the Church had conversations with the local āiga and nu’u that own these lands on which church facilities occupy? If so, what has been the general attitude regarding registering their customary land to the Church?

4. Does the Church have any intentions of transferring the status of these lands from customary land to free-hold lands?

5. How have the local congregations, āiga, and nu’u responded to the Church’s proposals regarding customary lands on which church facilities occupy?

Appendix B: Interview with MTC Student(s) and *Matai*

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Interview

Fa'afetai tele lava i lau afioga mo le faaavanoaina o lou taimi aua se faatalanoaga e uiga i le mataupu e pei ona tuuina atu.

1. Faamolemole, pe mafai ona faailoa mai lou suafa, le matua o lou soifua, faatasi ai ma sina tala e uiga i lou tuputupu a'e i totonu o lenei afioaga ma le EFKS?

2. O ai ni faifeau sa galulue i lenei afioaga a o e tuputupu a'e i totonu o lenei nu'u?

3. O lea sou faauigaina o upu nei, o le "igagato" ma le "matupalapala"?

4. Pe talafeagai le faaaogaina o nei upu i fanua ua foaiina atu e se matai ma se aiga i se tagata ese?

5. O ai le matai ma le aiga e patino i ai (le) fanua o loo tu ai nei le falesa, maota o le galuega, ma le maota o le faafeagaiga EFKS o lenei afioaga?

6. O e silafia se tala e uiga i fanua sa tu muamua ai le falesa, maota o le galuega, ma le maota o le faafeagaiga a o le'i siia mai i le tulaga ua i ai nei?

7. O e silafia se tala e faatatau i tu'utu'uga poo le feagaiga e uiga i le faaaogaina o fanua o loo tutū ai nei fale o le EFKS i lenei nu'u?

8. O lo'o aga atu nei le EFKS e saili se auala e fo'ia ai le faafitauli lenei o le toe lotea o fanua na foaiina mo le Lotu, e fanau ma i latou e tupuga mai i tua'a sa mua'i faia foai. E iai sou finagalo e fia faaalia e uiga i lenei mataupu?