

1. Ma`afu`otu`itonga

To stand at the north-western point of Tonga's main island, Tongatapu, where the country's first missionaries landed in 1797, is to be conscious of the island's most salient characteristic: its flatness. A long, low line of green, highlighted between the deep blue of the lagoon and the softer blue of the sky, stretches eastwards in a semi-circle, fading into the horizon beyond which lies Nuku'alofa, Tonga's capital. On Tongatapu, a generation after the missionaries' arrival, Moala, spouse of Aleamotu`a, the island's principal chief, gave birth to their first child. While the baby's name, Ma`afu`otu`itonga, was that of his great-grandfather, the sixth Tu`i Kānokupolu, he was usually known simply as Ma`afu. Since his death, he has been referred to in Tonga as Ma`afu Fisi, or Ma`afu of Fiji, a designation that helps distinguish him from other bearers of the name in Tonga and acknowledges the role he played, later in life, on the Fijian political stage.

Aleamotu`a's father, grandfather, and other relatives had ruled as Tu`i Kānokupolu at various times between the mid eighteenth century and 1820. The title, in temporary abeyance at the time of Ma`afu's birth, was one of the three offices of state in Tonga. The others were the Tu`i Tonga, still existing in the 1820s although with much reduced power, and the Tu`i Ha`atakalaua, defunct since 1799. The highest-ranking of these titles, that of the Tu`i Tonga, which evolved in the twelfth century, was endowed with sanctity in the eyes of the Tongan people. Very few people were allowed to associate with Tu`i Tonga, whose person was *tapu*. Despite the enshrined sanctity of this great office, it was never immune from the winds of political fortune.¹ It is worth remembering, in the light of Ma`afu's future career in Fiji, that the islands subject to the Tu`i Tonga's influence at various times during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries included not only modern Tonga, but also Samoa, Tokelau, Uvea, Futuna and part of Lau, the eastern archipelago of Fiji.

Tu`i Tonga functioned both as a temporal ruler and as a sacred intermediary with the gods. As the population of Tonga, and particularly Tongatapu, increased, the demands placed on him became increasingly onerous. A solution adopted during the fifteenth century was the creation of the new title of Tu`i Ha`atakalaua, whose purpose was to absorb the office of *hau*, hitherto the exclusive domain of the Tu`i Tonga. The *hau* was both secular and political; its incumbent came

¹ For a detailed treatment of the origins and changing character of the three Tongan offices of state, see Elizabeth Bott, "Power and rank in the Kingdom of Tonga", *JPS*, Vol. 90, no. 1, March 1981, 7–81; Elizabeth Bott, *Tongan Society at the time of Captain Cook's Visits: Discussions with Her Majesty Queen Sālote Tupou*, Wellington 1982; I.C. Campbell, *Classical Tongan Kingship*, Nuku'alofa 1989; I.C. Campbell, *Island Kingdom: Tonga Ancient and Modern*, second edition, Christchurch 2001, Chs 1 and 2; E.W. Gifford *Tongan Society*, Honolulu 1929; Sione Latukefu, *The Tongan Constitution*, Nuku'alofa 1975, Chs 1 and 2.

to exercise functions independent of the Tu`i Tonga, whose duties were both religious and ceremonial. In practice, the country's most powerful chief was usually considered as *hau*. He had to belong to a royal lineage and should have demonstrated both leadership qualities and military prowess. His position was never secure; there are examples in Tongan history of a *hau* being challenged and sometimes deposed by members of his own caste.² While political power was an accepted prerogative of Tonga's most successful chief, challenges to that power from other chiefs could always occur.

The duality of kingship following the creation of the Tu`i Ha`atakalaua reflected an increasingly complex society. The division of executive duties was to be repeated in the seventeenth century, when the sixth Tu`i Ha`atakalaua, Mo`unga-o-tonga, apparently followed his ancestor's example in creating another lineage, intended to absorb some of his functions. Accounts of the origin of this new lineage, eventually known as that of the Tu`i Kānokupolu, could well owe more to myth than to history. A son of Mo`unga-o-tonga, Ngata, whose mother was Samoan, was supposedly sent to govern the poor district of Hihifo in western Tongatapu. The title of Tu`i Kānokupolu was probably not used until the time of Ngata's grandson, Mataeletu`apiko. Its meaning has been given as "flesh or heart of Upolu' in honour of Tohu`ia, mother of Ngata, and the many supporters she brought with her from the Samoan island of Upolu".³ The title reflects a consolidation, over at least three generations, of a power that came to extend well beyond Hihifo. The role of the Tu`i Kānokupolu can be considered as that of a secular king.

The new lineage gradually eclipsed both its predecessors. Evidence for this fundamental change in the Tongan polity is found in the genealogies of the Tu`i Tonga, whose office holders had been wont to seek their wives from the daughters of whoever was *hau*, in practice usually the Tu`i Ha`atakalaua. The genealogies reveal that the daughters of the Tu`i Kānokupolu came to be seen as the most suitable.⁴ Since, in Tonga, the personal rank of a male ruler is inherited from his mother, this change of allegiance indicated the growing prestige of the Tu`i Kānokupolu. From the eighteenth century, the Tu`i Kānokupolu was often, but not always, considered as *hau*, thanks to the power and prestige accrued to his office. In 1799, the office of Tu`i Ha`atakalaua became extinct following the death of its last incumbent, while the office of Tu`i Tonga remained sanctified by religion and removed from actual power. The name borne by Tupoulahi's immediate predecessor, Ma`afu`otu`itonga, can be translated as "fire or weapon of the Tu`i Tonga",⁵ an indication of the perceived role of the holder of that

2 Niel Gunson, "The *hau* concept of leadership in western Polynesia", *JPH*, Vol. XIV, 1979, 28-29.

3 Phyllis Herda, *The transformation of the traditional Tongan polity: a genealogical consideration of Tonga's past*, unpublished PhD thesis, ANU, 1988, 73. See also Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, 21.

4 Gifford, 35.

5 *ibid.*, 99-100; Tupou Posese, personal communication, Nuku`alofa, May 1995.

office. By the 1820s, the decade of Ma'afu's birth, more than a generation of instability, punctuated by intermittent civil war, meant that the Tu'i Tonga and Tu'i Kānokupolu titles no longer possessed the means to confer authority, as they had traditionally done. Force had become necessary to establish and maintain power. Following the death in 1820 of the previous Tu'i Kānokupolu, Aleamotu'a's nephew Tupouto'a, no-one was appointed in his place. The absence of a Tu'i Kānokupolu is an indication not only of the instability of the times but also of the *Realpolitik* of Tonga, where military power, always essential for the *hau*, had become a concomitant of political authority.

The nature of concepts such as rank, authority and power should be considered in the light of the aberrant nature of Tongan politics in the 1820s and especially with regard to Aleamotu'a, whose appointment as Tu'i Kānokupolu in 1827 occurred as a consequence of unprecedented political circumstances. A modern scholar has proposed some useful working definitions:

By 'rank' I mean a quality commanding respect and deference, and inherited from one's parents; it cannot be altered either by one's own achievements, or by one's failures. By 'power' I mean legitimate, institutionalised power. 'Power' [involves the] capacity to direct and order the activities of other people.⁶

Aleamotu'a, also known by his family name of Tupou, possessed rank, not only because of his close relationship to his predecessors as Tu'i Kānokupolu, but especially through his mother Kaufusi, a member of the Fale Fisi, or House of Fiji.⁷ The Fale Fisi, although considered foreign, enjoyed high status because its Fijian male progenitor had married a sister of the Tu'i Tonga, the highest-ranking female in Tonga.⁸ Authority derived from such august rank has been described as "the socially recognised right to rule".⁹ The essential difference between Aleamotu'a and most of his predecessors lay in his actual power, or capacity to rule, which was largely confined to the district around Nuku'alofa. Moreover, he was sympathetic to Christianity at a time when many other Tongatapu chiefs bitterly opposed it. Aleamotu'a had yet to accommodate the demonstrated military power of his great-nephew Tāufa'āhau, who after 1826 was the effective master of Ha'apai and Vava'u, the other principal island groups of Tonga. Tāufa'āhau, the most powerful chief in the islands, was considered as *hau*, and could assume the role of kingmaker. Any "socially recognised right to rule" possessed by Aleamotu'a counted for less than his nephew's acquired power. Henceforth Aleamotu'a's authority, limited as it was, would increasingly

6 Bott, "Power and Rank...", 10.

7 Aleamotu'a is also sometimes referred to as Tupou-in-Faletu'ipapai, a reference to the cemetery where he was buried. Gifford, 91.

8 Adrienne Kaeppler, "Rank in Tonga", *Ethnology*, Vol. X, 1971, 174–193.

9 Bott, "Power and Rank...", 9.

depend on the support of Tāufa`āhau. While the prestige of the title of Tu`i Kānokupolu remained undiminished, its revival would depend on political circumstances.

There were three traditional divisions of society in Tonga: the first was the `eiki, consisting of the chiefs and their immediate relatives. This level included holders of the three offices of state as well as heads of the various *ha`a*, or clans. The second level, again very restricted, consisted of the *matapule*, who were ceremonial attendants of the great chiefs. The great bulk of the people formed the *tu`a*, or commoners.¹⁰ Another authority would exclude the Tu`i Tonga from the ranks of the `eiki and place him on an exalted level of his own, since by the sacred nature of his office he was differentiated from the ranks of the other great chiefs.¹¹ Membership of all classes, except occasionally some of the *matapule*, was ascribed: birth was the sole qualification. Ma`afu's later career, in both Tonga and Fiji, cannot be properly understood unless his origins near the apex of this highly stratified society are understood.

During the decade of Ma`afu's birth Tonga, after some 30 years of upheaval, experienced the intrusion of European weapons, trade goods and religion. The decades of instability had meant that, on Tongatapu at least, rank and power remained apart. Ever since the days when the Tu`i Tonga was invariably *hau*, actual power had to be maintained by force and remained subject to challenge. The titles of Tu`i Tonga and Tu`i Kānokupolu were both revived in 1826, following the victory of Tāufa`āhau over the forces of Laufilitonga, the designated Tu`i Tonga, at the latter's stronghold, the fortress of Velata in Ha`apai. Reintroduction of the titles reflected a desire by the Tongatapu chiefs to keep Tāufa`āhau at bay, rather than a wish to restore the traditional Tongan polity. His victory dealt a fundamental blow to the prestige of Tonga's greatest office of state, which had been growing weaker since the eighteenth century. Tāufa`āhau was already master of Ha`apai and Vava`u; now his ageing great-uncle was seen as a buffer to his assuming control of Tongatapu as well, despite the older man's dangerous flirtation with the new alien religion. Aleamotu`a was, according to his Wesleyan missionary friend John Thomas, a chief without a people.¹²

Tāufa`āhau, a son of Tupouto`a, complemented his great-uncle in that while Aleamotu`a possessed high rank, the younger chief had accumulated both political and military power. Many visitors to Tonga during the last years of Aleamotu`a's rule were dismissive of both the man and his authority. The American commodore Charles Wilkes, who called on the aged chief at his home

10 Marshall Sahlins, *Social Stratification in Polynesia*, Seattle 1958, 22.

11 Kaeppler, 174.

12 Thomas, quoted in Campbell, *Classical Tongan Kingship*, 28.

in Nuku'alofa in 1840, described Aleamotu'a as "much bent with age ... (and) fit for anything but to rule; domestic and affectionate to his family, caring little about the affairs of government, provided he can have his children and grandchildren around to play with".¹³ Aleamotu'a informed Wilkes that "he much desired peace and quietness and was willing to do anything to bring it about ... everyone seemed to give him the credit of being an imbecile sleepy fellow, and paid him little or no respect".¹⁴ Aleamotu'a's apparent ineptitude was of little consequence since Tāufa'āhau, in whose hands effective power lay, was anything but imbecile and sleepy. Wilkes' views reflect Aleamotu'a in his twilight years, a benign figure devoid of authority, no longer interested in an office he had not sought and to which he was elevated for political reasons. They tell us nothing of his involvement in the greatest catalyst for change in Tongan history: the advent of Christianity.

During his career in Fiji, Ma'afu was wont to proclaim himself as the champion of Christianity. Cynics then and later decried his hypocrisy, with his various interventions in support of persecuted Christians seen as nothing more than attempts to expand his power. Yet Ma'afu was his father's son: Aleamotu'a, during his early years as Tu'i Kānokupolu, was steadfast in his support of Christianity. When the London Missionary Society's John Williams and Charles Barff visited Tongatapu in 1830, they encountered a Fijian chief named Takai, originally from the island of Lakeba in Lau. Takai had spent time in Tahiti in 1825, where he attended the LMS church and school in the district of Papara. He requested the mission to send teachers to Lakeba, whose paramount chief, Tui Nayau, Takai described as "a friendly, peaceable man" who would afford the teachers a favourable reception.¹⁵ Two members of the Papara congregation, Hape and Tafeta, were chosen to travel to Fiji and in 1826 they accompanied Takai on board the *Snapper*, Captain Samuel Pinder Henry, en route for Lakeba. When they called at Tongatapu, Aleamotu'a, being informed by Takai that the Tahitians had "found the true God and the word of Life, and ... were going ... to the Feejees to teach his countrymen the way to Heaven ... answered ... It must not be so, if the word he spoke was really a good word it must not go to the tail first but begin with the head (The Tongatabooans take the lead among the Islands in their vicinity and are called the head and all others the tail)".¹⁶ So the Tahitians stayed, by invitation, not to say order, of Aleamotu'a, who was anxious for his people to hear the Word.

13 Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, Philadelphia 1845, 8–9.

14 *ibid.*, 28.

15 John Davies, *The History of the Tahitian Mission*, ed. by Colin Newbury, Hakluyt Society, Series II, Cambridge 1961, 289.

16 John Williams and Charles Barff, *Journal of a Voyage undertaken chiefly for the Purpose of introducing Christianity among the Feejees and Samoas 1830*, 4 Jul 1830.

A school opened by the Tahitians on Tongatapu was reported in 1827 as well attended and “countenanced by the chief Tupou”.¹⁷ Three months after his arrival in Tonga in June 1826, John Thomas recorded his puzzlement at the gift of five bunches of bananas from “the chief of Nuguloffa ... His name is Toobo”.¹⁸ The influence of “Toobo”, or Aleamotu`a, can be discerned throughout these early years of Christianity in Tonga. Tongatapu was then in a state of near anarchy, with each chief “like a little king in his own village and among his own people. This is the consequence of thirty years of unrest”.¹⁹ The absence of central authority was the principal reason why no Tu`i Kānokupolu had been appointed following the death of Tupouto`a in 1820. Despite these uncertainties, Aleamotu`a appears to have stood out among his fellow chiefs. Thomas wrote of him: “this man [h]as given up the Tonga gods he [h]as destroyed [sic] the spirit house and built a school and chapel to the Lord ... [where] as many as choose to go, assemble to worship ... These people have something to endure from other parts of Tonga, but the chief continues steadfast, and says he will die rather than give over praying”.²⁰ Aleamotu`a revealed considerable courage in remaining a committed Christian through the years of civil disturbance, when the evangelisation of Tonga depended largely on the political fortunes of the champions of the *lotu*, as the new faith was called. He even sent a secret message to Finau, ruling chief of Vava`u, urging his conversion.²¹ The young Ma`afu, residing in his father’s compound at Nuku`alofa and attending the mission school, must have learned an early lesson that the fortunes of Christianity were often linked to the political process.

Because of his ardour for religion, Aleamotu`a faced many difficulties. After he allowed the Tahitians to proceed to Lakeba in November 1827, he faced an ultimatum from most of his peers: he must renounce the *lotu* or prepare for war. Fearing for his personal safety following threats from some fellow chiefs, Aleamotu`a made active plans to flee. On the night of 28 November, he ordered “the two large Feejee canoes” to be launched, so that he, his family and some loyal followers could find refuge in Fiji or Samoa, where they could worship unmolested.²² According to Tāufa`āhau’s son Tevita `Unga, Aleamotu`a “took with him his son Ma`afu, [who] was still very young at the time”.²³ The following afternoon, after prolonged discussion “with three enemy chiefs”,

17 Davies, 291.

18 Thomas, Journal, 28 Sep 1826.

19 Thomas to GS, WMMS, 11 Apr 1827, WMMS IL, Box 10, Australia and South Seas, Jun 1826 – Oct 1827.

20 *ibid.*

21 Nathaniel Turner to GS, WMMS, 3 Apr 1828, WMN, Third Series, Vol. 8, 1829, 266.

22 Nathaniel Turner, Journal, 29 Nov 1827. See also Turner, Personal Narrative 1793–1846, 222–223; *The Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society*, 1828, 47–48; Extracts from remarks made by Captain J. Laws of HM Ship Satellite on some of the missions of the Pacific, quoted in WMMS IC, Friendly Islands, 1829; William Cross GS, WMMS, 12 Feb 1828, WMMS IL, Australia & South Seas, Oct 1827 – Apr 1828.

23 Narrative written at the request of Premier Tevita `Unga to describe the beginning of Christianity at Nuku`alofa, Baker Papers, PMB.

Aleamotu`a relented. He informed missionary Nathaniel Turner “that, for the present, he had yielded to his enemies, and that from this time the Lotu ... was to be stopped”.²⁴ In return for his apparent capitulation, the other chiefs agreed to invest Aleamotu`a as Tu`i Kānokupolu, a rank to which his birth, if not his inclination, entitled him. “This was a crafty move”, declared Turner, “inasmuch as the obligations of royalty implied the support of the gods of Tonga ... Tupou stepped into the snare”.²⁵ Aleamotu`a did not however abandon his principles. “I never heard”, Turner wrote, “what has been stated by others, that [Aleamotu`a] promised to give up the lotu”.²⁶ John Thomas correctly assessed the opposing chiefs’ motives in noting: “it is a political reason which drives them now”.²⁷ A new age existed in Tonga in the 1820s, with the advent of the *lotu*. No-one, including Aleamotu`a, could recognise its significance in the manner his son was to do in another time and place.

Aleamotu`a remained quietly determined never to abandon Christianity. On 1 December 1827, Thomas noted that the chief “agreed to give up the Lotou and be made Tooinacabola ... people are to meet at this place to make him. This is a serious event”.²⁸ Concerning his appointment, Aleamotu`a “seemed to condemn it in his heart, while he yields to it in his actions”.²⁹ He was invested with great ceremony on 7 December, in the presence of the two missionaries stationed at Nuku`alofa, Nathaniel Turner and William Cross, and about 300 other people. *Tu`a* were forbidden to witness so sacred a ceremony. As part of the ritual, while he sat against the traditional *koka* tree drinking his third cup of kava, Aleamotu`a “was formally named Tali-ai-Tupou after the family god, which was a great worldly honour, as well as divine, and he thus became the Tu`i Kānokupolu”.³⁰ This was an attempt by the chiefs to set Aleamotu`a firmly, and permanently, against the alien religion and all its implications. Aleamotu`a, “severely tried in his profession of Christianity”,³¹ evinced anxiety and some bewilderment. How much of these events were later related by Aleamotu`a to his favourite son, or were learned by the latter from others, cannot be known. It seems likely, in the light of Ma`afu’s career, that the lessons of his father’s great dilemma were not forgotten.

The Wesleyan missionary John Hunt, writing in Fiji some 20 years later, was more cynical than his colleagues in assessing Aleamotu`a’s motives. He described the

24 Nathaniel Turner, Journal, 29 Nov 1827. See also WMMS *Annual Report*, 1828, 47–48.

25 J.G. Turner, *The Pioneer Missionary; Life of the Rev. Nathaniel Turner, Missionary in New Zealand, Tonga and Australia*, Melbourne 1872, 100.

26 *ibid.*

27 Thomas, Journal, 20 Nov 1827.

28 Thomas, Journal, 1 Dec 1827.

29 *ibid.*, 4 Dec 1827.

30 Walter Lawry, *Friendly and Feejee Islands: A Missionary Visit to Various Stations in the South Seas in the Year 1847*, London 1850, 237. See also Latukefu, 4.

31 Thomas to GS, WMMS, 16 Mar 1846, *WMM*, Fourth Series, Vol. 2, Oct 1846, 1036–1038.

chief as “not sincere in either his adherence to Christianity or his renunciation of it”.³² Such an assertion, made with the confidence born of hindsight, is suspect. Thomas, Turner and Cross, all contemporaries of Aleamotu`a, recorded their awareness of the chief’s impossible position, as well as their belief in his ingenuousness. Thomas recognised the political implications of Aleamotu`a’s apparent apostasy, while Turner wrote that he and his colleagues were afraid that the investiture of the chief as Tu`i Kānokupolu “obliges the Individual thus created to maintain most of the ancient superstitions of the Land, and this it is certain was the principal thing which the chiefs who oppose our religion had in mind in creating Tubou to this office”.³³

Although the missionaries praised Aleamotu`a for his devotion to Christianity, the wider political agenda cannot be ignored. Tāufa`āhau, the most powerful chief in Tonga following his victory at Velata, was now rumoured to be planning an invasion of Tongatapu. Aside from its political implications, the elevation of his great-uncle to the dignity of Tu`i Kānokupolu possessed the potential to check any ambitions Tāufa`āhau might have had involving armed intervention on Tongatapu. Tāufa`āhau did not possess the support there that he enjoyed on Ha`apai and Vava`u, and would have had to tread warily. The significance of the investiture ceremonies extended well beyond the religious convictions of one chief.

Despite being backed into the proverbial corner on the question of the *lotu*, Aleamotu`a waited only six weeks before announcing that services could resume in the Nuku`alofa chapel, closed since the investiture.³⁴ Then, after announcing in March 1828 that he intended resuming public worship,³⁵ he felt confident enough to do so almost three months later.³⁶ Evidence of the other chiefs’ reaction to the Tu`i Kānokupolu’s unexpected move came from Hihifo, whose chief Ata, an unwavering opponent of the *lotu*, was “very angry that Tubo [h] as again come forward in the good cause”.³⁷ Nine days later, Aleamotu`a met in class and “engaged in prayer ... like one that had been accustomed to pray for years”.³⁸ This public identification with the *lotu* proved to be a political crossing of the Rubicon for Aleamotu`a, with one of its many consequences being that Ma`afu’s childhood would be very different from what it might have been, had not the already disturbed Tongan polity been thrown into further disarray by the intrusion of the new faith. The missionaries, determined that the Word should be widely disseminated among young Tongans, made arrangements for

32 John Hunt, *Memoir of the Rev. William Cross*, London 1861, 23.

33 Nathaniel Turner, Journal, 7 Dec 1827 (extract), WMMS IC, Friendly Islands Letters, 1822–1832.

34 *ibid.*, 20 Jan 1828.

35 William Cross, Journal, 27 Mar 1828 (extract), *WMM*, Third Series, Vol. 8, Jan 1829.

36 J.G. Turner, 108.

37 Thomas, Journal, 26 Jun 1828.

38 Nathaniel Turner, Journal, 10 Jun 1829 (extract), *WMMS Annual Report*, 1830, 41.

the production of the first schoolbook.³⁹ They also decided that schools should be established at each station, with handwritten lessons being used until the new book was available.⁴⁰ The first Wesleyan school in Nuku`alofa, later probably attended by Ma`afu, was opened in March 1828 “with an intention to teach both children and adults to read in their own language”.⁴¹ The foundations of education in Tonga were thus established before the small son of the Tu`i Kānokupolu was old enough to attend classes. Amid this apparent hive of spiritual and pedagogical industry, Tongatapu’s first public baptism, that of Ata’s nephew Lolohea, occurred in January 1828. The fortunes of Christianity, while appearing brighter, remained tied to those of Aleamotu`a.

At the close of the 1820s, it was Ma`afu’s spiritual development, rather than his secular education, which occupied the missionaries’ attention, if only by implication. In February 1829, William Cross administered baptism to five women, among them Moala, Ma`afu’s mother and the common law wife, in missionary eyes, of Aleamotu`a. Moala “chose the name of Mary, because it was the Christian name of our Lord’s mother, whom she appears to be ardently desirous of imitating”.⁴² Turner had no doubt “but she is a truly sincere and good woman”.⁴³ Moala, a teacher at the Nuku`alofa mission school, could read the hymns used at the services and knew several of them by heart. She placed great emphasis on the spiritual development of her children: “She frequently conducts their family worship herself, giving out the hymn, leading the tune and engaging in prayer. They generally commence their morning devotion as soon as it is daylight”.⁴⁴ Mary Moala, as she is known in Tonga today, appeared sincere in her conversion. On 10 January 1830, Aleamotu`a himself was baptised, along with four of his children, and he and Moala were united in Christian marriage. Ma`afu’s baptism provided him with a cloak of spiritual respectability, a garment he was never loath to assume, many years later, in Fiji.

The various ceremonies at Nuku`alofa were conducted by Turner in the presence of his colleagues Cross and Thomas and of a congregation exceeding 1,000. Aleamotu`a

was neatly dressed in native cloth and looked well. He stood up in front of the pulpit with his wife and children at his left hand. He first called the attention of the people assembled and then openly and firmly renounced the gods of Tonga, declaring them all to be vanity and lies.

39 The book, written by Nathaniel Turner, was entitled *First Lessons in the Language of Tongataboo, one of the Friendly Islands; to which are added a Prayer and several Hymns*.

40 Nathaniel Turner, Personal Narrative 1793–1846, 230–231.

41 Cross, Journal, 17 Mar 1828 (extract), *WMM*, Third Series, Vol. 8, Sep 1829, 629.

42 Cross to GS, WMMS, 9 Apr 1829, *WMM*, third series, Vol. 8, 546.

43 Nathaniel Turner, Journal, 28 Feb 1829 (extract), *WMM*, Third Series, Vol. 8, 564.

44 Cross to GS, WMMS, 9 Apr 1829.

He assured us and his people that he had cast away the things he knew to be sinful ... [and] that he had made an offering of himself, his wife and children that day unto the Lord...⁴⁵

Aleamotu`a urged his people to follow his example and to forsake the “ignorant priests ... who pretend to be inspired with the spirits of the gods”.⁴⁶ He was then baptised Josiah, the name of the Hebrew king who destroyed idols throughout Israel and ordered his people to return to the true God.⁴⁷ His choice of Christian name, doubtless inspired by the missionaries, revealed how anxious they were to use temporal authority to help spread the Word and to reinforce its message. Following Aleamotu`a’s death in 1845 Thomas, weary and disillusioned after almost 20 years in Tonga, wrote of the former king: “It had been well, if Josiah ... had possessed that zeal for God and for the spread of true religion, that distinguished him after whom he was named ... although he was not what we should have rejoiced to have seen him, yet he had something good in him towards the Lord our God”.⁴⁸ Perhaps little discredit should fall on Aleamotu`a for failing to achieve the harsh spiritual standards expected by the uncompromising Thomas. Nevertheless, the implications of the choice of name were not to be lost on Ma`afu.

After his baptism, Aleamotu`a presented four of his children for the same rite. Among the three boys and one girl, who were baptised Hezekiah, Henry, David and Selina, only Henry can be identified with certainty: he was of course Ma`afu. John Thomas, writing in 1846, stated that only one of the four was then still alive.⁴⁹ If that were true, the survivor had to be Ma`afu. The two children Aleamotu`a had with an earlier wife, Moe`ia, were named Ta`i and Hingano and appear not to have been included in the 1830 ceremony.⁵⁰ Other sons born to Ma`afu’s parents included Fisi`ihoi, who was baptised as William and who died in 1850 aged about 20;⁵¹ Samuel, baptised in June 1830 and buried one month later;⁵² Siaso Niumeitolu, who reached adulthood and fathered at least four children; Lausi`i, who was born in 1837 and lived only four months; and Josiah,

45 Nathaniel Turner, *Personal Narrative*, 301–302.

46 For the full text of Aleamotu`a’s speech, in both the original Tongan and an English translation, see Peter Bays, *A Narrative of the Wreck of the Minerva*, Cambridge 1831, 127–129.

47 2 Kings 23.

48 Thomas to GS, WMMS, 16 Mar 1846.

49 *ibid.* Because the Wesleyan missionaries used only Christian names in their writings, and because of discrepancies between Tongan genealogies, it is impossible to compile a definitive list of the children of Aleamotu`a and Mary Moala.

50 Ta`i and Hingano appear in Tongan genealogies as Taniele Ta`i and Simaima Hingano. They are likely to have been much older than the children of Aleamotu`a and Moala. Koe Tohi Hohoko `A Etueni Tupou and Tongan Genealogies Transcribed for E.W. Gifford, in private possession.

51 On 16 Jul 1850, Walter Lawry attended Fisi`ihoi’s funeral, remarking that the young man’s death “was rather sudden, and was brought on by his former profligacy”. Lawry, *A second missionary visit to the Friendly and Feejee Islands*, London 1851, 97.

52 Nathaniel Turner, *Journal*, 27 Jun 1830, WMN, Vol. 6, No 190, Oct 1831, 534.

baptised on 2 July 1843 “aged about one month”.⁵³ There were also daughters Vika Kaufusi, or Victoria, who reached adulthood and had two children, and Luisa Tupou, who appears to have died aged about 14. It has been suggested that Ma`afu was named Henry after his father’s friend Samuel Pinder Henry of Tahiti, but there is no contemporary evidence that this was so. Captain Henry was certainly on friendly terms with Aleamotu`a, since in 1828, when the captain called at Tongatapu on his way to Sydney, he presented Aleamotu`a with “a musket or two, a large quantity of fine beads, and some other articles valuable here”.⁵⁴ Ma`afu was often referred to during his adult life, in both Tonga and Fiji, as Enele or Henry Ma`afu.

The prospects of Christianity on Tongatapu were linked to the political fortunes of Aleamotu`a which, following the chief’s baptism and marriage, continued to appear promising. When the first post of a new chapel was erected in Nuku`alofa, Turner was enthusiastic: “The site of the chapel is excellent, about 80 feet above the level of the sea ... the highest spot of ground on Tonga[tapu]. And what renders the site of our chapel more interesting is, it is in the centre and on the summit of their great fortification at Nuku`alofa”.⁵⁵ The placement of the chapel on the hill known as Sia-ko-Veiongo, the site of an earlier fortification, was not without irony. One of the effects of the wars on Tongatapu during that decade was the proliferation of fortresses, where ‘rebel’ chiefs, those who rejected the *lotu* and its inherent threat to Tonga’s highly structured social order, took refuge with their followers. Many of the chiefs who embraced Christianity sought to enhance their social position or political power. Others preferred their traditional society, a preference that meant that one pillar of that tradition, loyalty to the Tu`i Kānokupolu, was now difficult to maintain. Aleamotu`a, invested as Tu`i Kānokupolu in a time-honoured ceremony, sought to govern within the bounds of the traditional Tongan hierarchy. Yet he was a Christian, and wished to promote the faith among his fellow chiefs. In so doing, he was bound to cast severe strains on the polity of his divided island.

The new chapel, which opened in September 1830 with a congregation of about 1,000, including Aleamotu`a and his family, was certainly a boost for Christianity on Tongatapu. Nevertheless, much still depended on Aleamotu`a’s ability to help spread the new faith, whose self-proclaimed champion he was, while maintaining his secular power. His own life was not devoid of tragedy; two months before the chapel opening Turner recorded the interment of Aleamotu`a’s month-old son, Samuel:

53 Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, Baptism Register, Tongatapu Circuit 1838–1880, PMB 992.

54 Thomas, Journal, 7 Apr 1828.

55 Nathaniel Turner, Journal, 5 May 1830, *WMN*, Vol. 6, 1829–1831, 533.

The father and mother, with some hundreds, attended ... Many were affected to tears while I addressed them on the subject of death, and the happiness of that world towards which little Samuel had just taken flight. The father in particular listened with great attention and interest...⁵⁶

The loss of this month-old child, the small brother whom Ma`afu must barely have remembered, reveals their father Aleamotu`a as a man who remained committed to the Christian faith and derived benefit from it. In later years, as he grew into old age and as his son left childhood behind, some of his missionary friends came to see the old man's vulnerability as weakness and even moral turpitude. Whatever flaws of character Aleamotu`a possessed, his influence on Ma`afu, who spent most of his first 20 years in his father's household, must have been great.

Williams and Barff, touring Tongatapu in 1830, recorded that they made frequent calls on Aleamotu`a "and were much pleased with his general deportment. ... Tupou kindly entertained all our native teachers and their families at his house more than a week ... The Queen appeared at the house of God on the Lord's day in her new bonnet".⁵⁷ We can readily imagine, from this account and others, little Ma`afu growing to maturity in a household permeated by the spiritual succour provided by visiting missionaries and native teachers, while the finer details of Christian living were manifested in such genteel touches as bonnets for the ladies to wear to chapel. Both Ma`afu's parents appear to have practised Christianity with a fervour characteristic of the newly converted.⁵⁸

It is useful to compare missionary accounts with those from other outsiders not concerned to promote the interests of evangelical Christianity. The barque *Elizabeth*, Captain Henry Ransome, arrived at Tongatapu in October 1831. One week later, Ransome described Aleamotu`a as "much beloved and respected by his subjects [and] very particular in the observance of his religious duties".⁵⁹ Before he left Tonga, the captain attended service in the Nuku`alofa chapel, where Aleamotu`a "appeared to pay great attention to the sermon ... He is very friendly with the missionaries and endeavours to render their situation as comfortable as he can, his Subjects also follow his example".⁶⁰ Yet it was to be a missionary who was the first to see moral weakness in Aleamotu`a. In 1832, John Thomas observed that Aleamotu`a lacked spiritual fortitude. "Since his baptism", wrote Thomas, [Aleamotu`a]

56 Nathaniel Turner, Journal, Jul 1830, *WMN*, Vol. 6, Jul 1831, 533.

57 Williams and Barff, 6 Jul 1830.

58 For examples of missionary optimism, see Nathaniel Turner, Journal, September 1830, *WMM*, Third Series, Vol. 10, Oct 1831, 713 and William Woon to GS, *WMMS*, 23 Mar 1831, *WMN*, Vol. 7, No. 193, Jan 1832, 1–3.

59 Henry Ransome, Journal on board the barque "Elizabeth" 4 April 1831 – 4 Jun 1834, 20 Oct 1831.

60 *ibid.*, 23 Oct 1831.

has held fast to his profession. He has some good qualities, but is so mild in his government, that one is reminded of the state of the Israelites, where there was no king, 'and every man did what he thought was right in his own eyes'. It is thought that if Tubou had used his influence amongst his chiefs and people, hundreds, who at this time worship dumb idols, would have been worshippers of the true God.⁶¹

Thomas does not suggest how Aleamotu`a might better have influenced his fellow chiefs. Missionary David Cargill, who arrived in Tongatapu in January 1834, described Aleamotu`a as "a tall, stoutly-built man; but his countenance is not expressive of either intellect or benignity".⁶² Despite this poor estimate of Aleamotu`a's abilities, Cargill was later to praise the chief's spiritual strength. Aleamotu`a "embraced the religion of the Bible from a conviction of its truth, not influenced by political motives, or the expectation of political aggrandisement", Cargill wrote in 1842.⁶³ The rebel chiefs of Tongatapu, on the other hand, rebelled because Aleamotu`a renounced heathenism:

They did not upbraid him with an attempt to encroach on their privileges, or endanger their liberties or their lives, but uniformly asserted their love to the religion of their ancestors, and a determination never to abandon it; these were the motives by which they were stimulated.⁶⁴

Cargill's estimation of the "rebel" chiefs' motives leaves us with the picture of a "king" whose feet were planted firmly on the moral high ground, at least by missionary standards. Such an interpretation implied a rigid separation of political and religious motives on the chiefs' part, a view somewhat at variance with reality. In the 1830s, political divisions among the Tongatapu chiefs had come to assume a religious aspect; Aleamotu`a was a Christian, while his opponents remained heathen. Cargill's opinion nonetheless leaves open the question of how Aleamotu`a reacted to the pressures of the 1830s, when Ma'afu was rapidly growing to maturity.

Thomas' restrained comments on Aleamotu`a's unwillingness to assert his influence as he should are interspersed with more direct criticisms, the most serious of which concerned the sin of spiritual pride. At a service in March 1832, Thomas "corrected some errors into which our people are in danger of falling, such as calling Tubou the rock of religion at Tonga".⁶⁵ Later the same year, Thomas "told the people not to call their chief ... a Minister of Christ ... they seem to wish to make him like a Pope ... I do not wish to offend him, but

61 Thomas, Journal, 8 Aug 1832.

62 David Cargill, *Memoirs of Mrs Margaret Cargill*, London 1841, 38.

63 David Cargill, *A Refutation of Chevalier Dillon's slanderous attacks on the Wesleyan Missionaries in the Friendly Islands*, London 1842, 10.

64 *ibid.*, 5–6.

65 Thomas, Journal, 11 Mar 1832.

cannot agree for him to meddle in [church] matters".⁶⁶ It is unfortunate that our documented sources for Aleamotu'a's life during the first half of the 1830s are largely confined to missionary writings, chief among them those of Thomas, whose views on religious matters were narrow at best and ignorant at worst. But Aleamotu'a's was not the only influence on the young Ma'afu, and perhaps not even the most important; Moala must be credited with her part in the formation of the character of her son.

Unlike her husband, Moala, according to the missionaries, could do no wrong during these early years of Christianity in Tonga. In 1830, Cross forwarded to his Society in London two specimens of the handwriting of the more than 60 Tongatapu women. One example was "by Mary, the wife of our chief Tubou". It read: "Lord Jehovah, give me a wise mind. I will give thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ, all the days of my life in this world".⁶⁷ Missionary William Woon echoed his colleague's sentiments in 1831:

I have been busily employed in the printing office, preparing the little book, ... I ... intend to print 3000 copies ... While engaged at the press, the Queen, an excellent well-informed woman, paid me a visit. I gave her a copy of the work ... with which she was much pleased and delighted.⁶⁸

The book consisted of passages of Scripture translated into Tongan. Three years later, Moala stood equally high in the missionaries' esteem: "The chief's wife is a valuable acquisition to [the female] school [at Nuku'alofa] and is a very diligent and steady support of the infant church of Christ".⁶⁹ By that year, Ma'afu must have begun his education at one of the mission schools. It appears he received both encouragement and practical help from his apparently scholarly and pious mother, to whom it seems fair to look as the source of his undoubted intelligence.

The progress of education on Tongatapu from the earliest Wesleyan schools established in the 1820s is well documented although, since no attendance records have survived,⁷⁰ we cannot be certain that young Ma'afu attended any of the schools. Yet it is impossible to imagine that he did not; his mother was both literate and an avid promoter of education in Tonga, while Aleamotu'a saw himself as a patron of the church and all its works. Ma'afu's signature, in a somewhat immature hand, has survived on many documents in Fiji. So far as the missionaries in Tonga during the 1830s were concerned, formal education was the chief means by which Christian doctrine could be inculcated and indeed

66 *ibid.*, 8 Jul 1832.

67 Cross to GS, WMMS, 31 Mar 1830, WMMS IL, Australia and South Seas. Moala's actual words, as they appear in Cross's letter, were "Viki Jihova, ke mi ha loto boto kiate au. Heu fakafetai kihe Eihe ko Jisu Kalaisi ihe aho fulike o eku maui i mamani".

68 William Woon, Journal, 14 April 1831, *WMM*, Third Series, Vol. 11, Apr 1832, 284.

69 *WMMS Annual Report*, School Report of the Friendly Islands District, 1834, 38.

70 Rev. Dr H.G. Cummins, personal communication.

there is circumstantial evidence that Ma`afu learned more than how to write his name. Captain Ransome was a guest in Aleamotu`a's compound one day during his 1831 visit:

we passed by the grounds belonging to the King who we found seated on a grass plot with several of his chiefs around him ... When Tubou saw us, he motioned for us to sit down with him, when we had an agreeable repast of bananas and cava – the king's house is spacious and neatly built, his family, all daughters I saw engaged in reading and writing, having been instructed by the missionaries, they had several books which they [sic] had procured for them...⁷¹

Ransome's reference to Aleamotu`a's family as "all daughters" could be explained by Ma`afu's absence from the compound when the captain visited, or perhaps the boy was thought too young to begin formal schooling. Encouraged by the missionaries, Aleamotu`a and Moala, having ensured the education of their daughters, were not likely to neglect that of their sons.

The perception which the adult Ma`afu possessed of the role of missionaries, and of the church generally, as well as the use he was to make of them for essentially political ends, probably owed something to the education he received in Tonga. In mission schools, before Ma`afu was old enough to attend, the Biblical and Wesleyan model was used "as a basis for teaching on kingship and law",⁷² while the Wesleyans' aim was "to teach both adults and children to read in their own language".⁷³ They sought to establish their schools and churches firmly at village level, as a means of promoting stability and ensuring that the church became the focus of social activity. The schools were an inherent part of this process, a force of indoctrination that would teach the Tongan people how to live a proper Christian life within, as far as possible, the existing framework of Tongan society. With church control of education absolute, religion and literacy would remain indissolubly linked in Tonga during the years of Ma`afu's childhood and youth.

Aleamotu`a was the "king" cast by the missionaries, and to some extent himself, in the role of defender of righteousness on Tongatapu. As a mission school pupil, and as his father's son, Ma`afu was able to appreciate the benefits that could come the way of the ruler who saw himself, and was seen by others, as the champion of the cause of the Lord. Nevertheless, the foothold secured by Turner and his colleagues remained precarious during the years when Ma`afu would have attended a mission school. Despite the strength of the schools in and near Nuku`alofa, strong opposition to Christianity persisted elsewhere on

71 Ransome, 25 Oct 1831.

72 H.G. Cummins, "Missionary Politicians", *JPH*, Vol. 10, 1975, 108.

73 Cross, Journal, 17 March 1828, *WMN*, Vol. 6, Sep 1829, 130.

Tongatapu. From 1833 until 1841 the Tongan mission schools, which catered for adults as well as children, were under the overall charge of Jane Tucker, wife of Wesleyan missionary Charles Tucker. The proficiency of the schools, and of Mrs Tucker, was praised by Commodore Wilkes during his 1840 visit. The main mission school in Nuku`alofa, which Ma`afu had probably attended, “equals, if it does not exceed in order and regularity any in our own country”.⁷⁴ Various curricula, all printed in the vernacular in Tonga during the 1830s, placed emphasis on Christian virtues such as fellowship with all people, avoidance of hatred, and the importance of love and forgiveness, as part of the Christian ethic.⁷⁵ Biblical stories illustrating these precepts were also prominent; included among them were the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son.⁷⁶ These were some of the influences acting on the mind of young Ma`afu at a time when, in Tonga, such principles were more often honoured in the breach than in the observance.

The schools afforded the Wesleyans an opportunity to promote an equally important aspect of their programme: their theories of kingship. In 1834 two small school books were published which “taught that kingship was divinely ordained, that it involved important duties and responsibilities, and that the king and his people were bound together in a covenant with Jehovah, the basis of this agreement being the Ten Commandments”.⁷⁷ The books contained extracts from the First Book of Samuel, whose theme “is that faithfulness to God brings success, while disobedience brings disaster”.⁷⁸ The Lord’s message to the priest Eli was unequivocal: “I will honour those who honour me, and I will treat with contempt those who despise me”.⁷⁹ The missionaries sought to inspire the ruler and people of Tongatapu with the story of the evolution in ancient Israel of a monarchy inspired by the Lord and firmly under his sovereignty. Although none is on record as saying so, the missionaries in the 1830s might well have considered “King Josiah’s” intelligent young son as one on whom the Biblical concept of kingship should be particularly impressed. Influenced as they were by the custom of primogeniture, which was observed in most European monarchies if not in Tonga, they might have considered Ma`afu as a possible future Tu`i Kānokupolu and as “king” of Tongatapu, if not eventually of the whole of Tonga. Yet Tāufa`āhau had attracted much favourable missionary comment as early as 1828, when he called “to pay his respects” to Aleamotu`a, newly invested as Tu`i Kānokupolu. On his visit, Tāufa`āhau impressed Nathaniel Turner with his

74 Wilkes, 18.

75 For example, *Ko e Motua Lea*, Nuku`alofa, 1831, and *Ko e Tohi Aho* [The School Book], second edition, Nuku`alofa, 1835, quoted in H.G. Cummins, “Holy War: Peter Dillon and the 1837 massacres in Tonga”, *JPH*, Vol. 12, 1977, 28.

76 *ibid.*

77 Cummins, “Missionary Politicians...”, 109.

78 *The New English Bible*, Introduction to the First Book of Samuel.

79 1 Samuel 2:30.

intelligence and curiosity concerning Christianity, and asked Turner to send a missionary to Ha'apai.⁸⁰ According to John Williams, Tāufa'āhau “resolved at once to abandon the gods of his forefathers, and place himself under Christian instruction”.⁸¹ Conversion was necessary for political reasons since, even in 1828, it was apparent that any chief wishing to gain control over all Tonga would have to come to terms with the new faith. Coming to terms, in the long run, could only mean becoming a Christian.

Although Tāufa'āhau's military power was not yet extended to Tongatapu, the chief was in the early 1830s regarded as *hau* by all of Tonga, except for the dissident chiefs on Tongatapu itself. Evidence of Tāufa'āhau's perception of his role came in 1831, when missionary Peter Turner noted that the chief “was called King George as he had chosen the name of the late King of England George”.⁸² Having begun to meet in class in 1830, Tāufa'āhau was baptised as “Joaji” in August 1831, in the presence of about 2,000 people. His three children, also baptised, were given the names of Sālote, Tafita and Josaia. Thomas, understandably, was enthusiastic:

What was said of Saul of old may justly be said of our king; `a choice young man (1 Samuel 9:2) and a goodly, there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he, from his shoulders and upwards he was higher than any of the people⁸³

Another Biblical king had emerged, or so Thomas would have us believe. Almost 20 years later, Tāufa'āhau's son Tevita `Unga, the “Tafita” of 1831, who was blind in one eye, informed another Wesleyan missionary, Richard Lyth, that this affliction was the cause of his father's embracing Christianity.⁸⁴ There was also an oral tradition that Tāufa'āhau “confessed, many years afterwards, to a close friend and relative that the excellence of European arms and tools first attracted him to Christianity”.⁸⁵ Whatever his reasons, King George, as Europeans would usually know him, was to remain steadfast in the faith, even though the quest that led him to accept Christianity was as much political as spiritual.

The missionaries' lavish praise for Tāufa'āhau reflected their belief that the pendulum of political power would, in the fullness of time, swing his way. That power was already his, at one level; all that remained was for him to exercise it over all of Tonga. Implicit in many of the missionaries' eulogies is their belief that “King George” was the natural successor to Aleamotu`a, not only as ruler of

80 J.G. Turner, 103.

81 John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands...*, 273.

82 Peter Turner, Journal, 13 Jun 1831.

83 Thomas to GS, WMMS, 2 Sep 1831, Diary and Letter Book. See also Peter Turner, Missionary Papers, 53.

84 Richard Lyth, Journal, 5 Apr 1850.

85 E.E.V. Collocott, “Taufa'ahau”, *Journal and Proceedings of the Australasian Methodist Historical Society, Sydney*, Vol. 2, part 2, January 1934, 85–94.

Tongatapu, but as king of a united and Christian Tonga. While any accession to power by Tāufa'āhau remained in the future, Aleamotu'a continued to impress missionary visitors, even those with so discerning an eye as John Williams. In Tongatapu again late in 1832, Williams described Aleamotu'a as "decidedly firm in his profession" and his wife Moala as "sincerely pious". Moala in fact was "always employed at home in attending to the wants of her little family ... or in attending religious meetings schools and visiting the sick".⁸⁶ Aleamotu'a knew that many of the chiefs were angry with him for having embraced Christianity, but submitted "willingly to his losses of property, food and respect".⁸⁷ These comments from Williams form a pleasant contrast with Thomas's niggardly complaints about Aleamotu'a's supposed spiritual laxity. Aleamotu'a, human failings notwithstanding, remained Tu'i Kānokupolu, confident in the bond with his great-nephew. Yet, even though his position was in this one respect secure, the uncertain and indeed ominous political scene on Tongatapu during these years meant that no-one could vouchsafe even a guess concerning the future inheritance, either personal or political, of the young Ma'afu.

The civil strife that recommenced in January 1834 was another episode of the instability that bedevilled Tongatapu for over 30 years. On this occasion, however, Tāufa'āhau emerged as a significant player. Until the previous year, his formal chieftainship had been confined to Ha'apai, but after his investiture as Tu'i Vava'u in 1833, he became effectively master of central and northern Tonga. Tāufa'āhau thus brought impeccable credentials with him when he arrived at Tongatapu in February 1834 with 50 double canoes filled with warriors. Although he has been accused of intervening in order to further his own ambitions, an assertion impossible to refute, his intervention, as *hau*, was legitimate.⁸⁸ Inevitably, the missionaries on Tongatapu saw his arrival as evidence of his support for Aleamotu'a against the anti-Christian forces. Before he landed, some of his followers disembarked and presented Aleamotu'a "with large quantities of food ... as a token of humility and respect. While Josiah continues as the head of his children, [Tāufa'āhau], though next in rank to himself, must sit amongst the common people".⁸⁹ Like the children, Tāufa'āhau remained content to play a subordinate role, avoiding armed clashes amid persistent rumours of war.⁹⁰ His part in the avoidance of conflict was considered crucial: when the United States Exploring Expedition visited Tonga in 1840, Commodore Wilkes recorded that only the intervention of Tāufa'āhau had saved the Tu'i Kānokupolu from being driven from his kingdom.⁹¹

86 John Williams, *The Samoan Journals of the Rev. John Williams 1830 and 1832*, ed. by Richard Moyle, Canberra 1984, 202 (26 Nov 1832).

87 *ibid.*

88 J.W. Davidson, *Peter Dillon of Vanikoro*, Melbourne 1975, 270.

89 Thomas, *Journal*, 28 Feb 1834.

90 *ibid.*, Jan – Mar 1834, *passim*.

91 Wilkes, 38.

While the mission school curriculum continued to emphasise Christian virtues,⁹² the tense religious and political circumstances then prevailing on Tongatapu posed a special challenge. The missionaries responded by highlighting Old Testament condemnations of idol worshippers, lawbreakers and heathens in general. These teachings were contained in five small booklets, two of which featured translations from 1 Samuel dealing with King Saul's battles against opponents of his secular rule and of the spiritual rule of Jehovah. The subject matter of these books reveals the missionaries' awareness of the political implications of acceptance of the *lotu*. The chosen parts of 1 Samuel dealt with the armed resistance faced by King Saul, resistance that had arisen through fear that the enemies of Jehovah would triumph. Saul had been chosen as Israel's king in order to save his people from their enemies. All five booklets enlarged on the theme that Jehovah will give strength to a righteous ruler who makes war on idolaters.⁹³ The missionaries' choice was apposite: the Christians of Tongatapu were cast in the role of the Lord's chosen people, who must be ruthless in their defence of the true religion. Their ultimate victory could not be doubted.

As a pupil in the Nuku`alofa mission school, and especially as the son of Aleamotu`a, the missionaries' chosen defender of righteousness, Ma`afu was in a unique position to appreciate the benefits likely to accrue to a ruler who was endorsed as the champion of the *lotu*. But he was still very young and was spending his school years in an atmosphere of continued upheaval and threats of war. We have no way of knowing for how long he attended school, or how well he learned to read in his own language. In later years, when he had achieved a position of power in Fiji, before and after its cession to Great Britain, he was known to put pen to paper only to sign his name. Nevertheless, the society in which he grew up must be considered vital in the formation of the future Tui Lau. Both inside the mission classroom and within the confines of his father's compound at Nuku`alofa, Ma`afu had the opportunity to learn a vital lesson: that a ruler who fought in the defence of the faith need never shed the cloak of justice. He might also have learned that religion can also play an essentially political role, serving as a veneer for the acquisition and consolidation of political power. Most importantly of all, as he watched the drama unfolding on Tongatapu's political stage, Ma`afu probably realised that he could never become Tu`i Kānokupolu himself, even by force, so long as Tāufa`āhau was alive.

92 For detailed discussions of the various curricula used in the mission schools, see Cummins, "Holy War..." and *School and Society*...

93 For example, Psalm 2 "God's Chosen King" and Psalm 18 "David's Song of Victory", quoted in Cummins, *School and Society*..., 167.

Although we cannot definitely place Ma'afu in a classroom at any time during his childhood, we do have a description of the scene inside the Nuku'alofa mission school, with which the boy was certainly acquainted. Jane Tucker's "recollections of ... missionary life in the Friendly Islands" are on record:

The students were all seated on the ground in the schoolroom; and ... each was furnished with a slate and pencil. They wrote from copy-slips, which [Mrs Tucker] had prepared for them. After practising writing for some time, those who were most advanced were formed into a class. A sentence was read to them, and they were required to write it on their slate. This was generally well done, as the Tonguese have little difficulty in spelling their own language correctly. In hope of benefiting [sic] the local preachers, she made it one of their school exercises to write sermons...⁹⁴

We are entitled to picture the child Ma'afu seated on the classroom floor, slate in hand, absorbing both the alphabet and the faith of his missionary fathers. It is likely, given his keen intelligence and his august rank, that the lessons being enacted beyond the classroom walls absorbed the greater part of his attention.

More than a year later, the difficulties faced by the Tu'i Kānokupolu were no easier of resolution. Christianity in Tongatapu was "almost totally confined to Nuku'alofa [and] a spirit of opposition to Christianity seems to have grown up in the minds of some of the chiefs who were previously indifferent".⁹⁵ When in September 1835 a stockade was built around the chapel on Sia-ko-Veiongo, Aleamotu'a at last appeared determined to stand up to his disaffected fellow chiefs. "They have made a regular shuttlecock of [Aleamotu'a]", wrote missionary James Watkin, "and he has endured their bad manners with great patience but is tired at length, and determined to resist their evil intentions".⁹⁶ Desultory murmurings, sometimes of sufficient strength to be called plots, had surrounded Aleamotu'a ever since his investiture as Tu'i Kānokupolu in 1827. Tāufa'āhau's arrival in February 1834 with his warriors had merely replaced the lid on a simmering cauldron.

The year 1834 had been marked by an unprecedented religious revival, "a most beloved manifestation of the spirit", in Ha'apai and Vava'u.⁹⁷ Tongatapu nevertheless remained aloof from this visitation of the holy spirit to the point where, owing to "the belligerent aspect of affairs", the usual Wesleyan

94 Sarah Farmer, *Tonga and the Friendly Islands with a sketch of their Mission History, for young people*, London 1855, 331.

95 James Watkin, *Journal*, 11 Apr 1835.

96 *ibid.*, 25 Sep 1835.

97 *ibid.*, 9 Aug 1834.

school report could not be submitted.⁹⁸ The following year, prejudice against Christianity reached new heights; opposition had “never been more violent than at the commencement of the present year”.⁹⁹ Many people, fearful of war and famine, left Tongatapu. During one of several visits to the island, Tāufa`āhau “loaded several large canoes with yams, and sent them to the principal heathen Chiefs, as an expression of his sympathy and friendship, or as a proof of his desire to alleviate their sufferings and relieve their distresses”.¹⁰⁰ As if famine were not enough, fresh rumours arose that some chiefs were again plotting to depose Aleamotu`a, “which would be small loss to him, for his authority is much reduced”.¹⁰¹ Ma`afu was little more than 12 and facing dangers more serious than those of his infancy.

Shortly afterwards, Ma`afu accompanied his mother and four brothers and sisters to Vava`u, a visit which Thomas, then stationed in the northern archipelago, ascribed solely to Moala's Christian duty. “It says something of their love that they should have engaged in a voyage of upwards of 140 miles in order to visit us”.¹⁰² It also says something of the dangers they faced at home, since Moala and her party were refugees from famine and growing unrest. With Thomas choosing to present her visit as something akin to a social call, he could hardly embellish his words with any hint of the gathering storm. Some three months earlier, one of the Tonga missionaries did vouchsafe some doleful news in the annual “Tonga School Report”: “I cannot boast of a great increase [of scholars] ... the state of the island from the prospect of war and its distressed condition in consequence of famine may perhaps be urged as the reasons why ... great numbers have removed in consequence and many who have not removed have been prevented from attending [school]”.¹⁰³ Missionary Stephen Rabone recorded the Tongatapu chiefs' desire to depose Aleamotu`a and “replace him with someone more favourable to their views and practices”.¹⁰⁴ In mid December, Tāufa`āhau called at Vava`u on his way from Ha`apai to Tongatapu. Aleamotu`a had sent for him as protection against the rebel chiefs' expressed wish for a new king, and he had come to Vava`u “to consult with the great chiefs of this place”.¹⁰⁵ On Tongatapu, the Christian supporters of Aleamotu`a

98 Watkin, Report of the Tonga Station for 1835, WMMS District Meeting Minutes, Fiji and Friendly Islands, 1827–1855.

99 Watkin, Report of the Tonga Station for the year ending 30 September 1836, WMMS District Meeting Minutes, Fiji and Friendly Islands, 1827–1855.

100 Cargill, *A Refutation...*, 14–15.

101 Watkin, Journal, 25 Sep 1835, *WMM*, Vol. 16, Third Series, Apr 1837, 302.

102 Thomas to GS, WMMS, 22 Dec 1835, *WMM*, Vol. 15, Third Series, Aug 1836, 622.

103 School Report for Tonga Station, 30 Sep 1836, WMMS Fiji and Friendly Islands District Meeting Minutes, 1827–1855.

104 Stephen Rabone, Journal, 23 Dec 1836.

105 Thomas, Journal, 20 Dec 1836; Rabone, Journal, 23 Dec 1836.

had been reluctant to advise their friends in Ha`apai and Vava`u that war was likely, "lest there should be the semblance of their having occasioned the war by ... having acquainted their auxiliaries with its probability".¹⁰⁶

The events of 1837 need not be considered in any detail here. The arrival of Tāufa`āhau with a fleet of canoes was inevitably seen as a hostile act by the heathen chiefs, who had long been anxious to provoke him to war.¹⁰⁷ The causes of the conflict, which began one week after his arrival, can best be ascribed to the polarisation of Tongan society. After hostilities commenced, the schools in Nuku`alofa quickly became overcrowded with refugees driven from their villages by the anti-*lotu* chiefs.¹⁰⁸ Two rebel forts were besieged, with that at Hule causing the greatest loss of life and occasioning considerable missionary distress, despite the Christian party's victory. According to Pita Vi, a Tongan teacher, the siege of Hule fortress occurred only after both Aleamotu`a and Tāufa`āhau had exercised the utmost Christian forbearance. "The Tu`i Kānokupolu sent word to the chiefs of Hule ... and told them that he loved them, but what were their wishes? Would they accept Christianity or would they not? ... they replied that they wanted to fight ... Then Josiah sent ... to Tāufa`āhau that he was to please himself".¹⁰⁹ The chiefs' quarrel was not so much with Aleamotu`a as with Tāufa`āhau, on whose power Aleamotu`a depended. Tāufa`āhau's position as *hau* was under challenge.

The Christian forces' capture of the fortification at Hule on 25 January resulted in the "murder of 300 men women and children from among the rebel ranks", while only six Christians fell.¹¹⁰ When fighting ceased in early February, the rebels were confined to three of their other large forts. Despite their setbacks, the heathen had remained "so infatuated ... that they would not lay down their arms", spurning peace offers from both Aleamotu`a and Tāufa`āhau.¹¹¹ In view of the nature of the propaganda that had for several years been dispensed in classroom and pulpit, it is worth considering missionary attitudes, in both Tonga and Great Britain, to the war itself and to the massacre at Hule in particular. Tāufa`āhau had been followed to Tongatapu by Thomas' urgent admonition not to attack first: on 8 January the missionary, still in Vava`u, had preached from 2 Chronicles 20, where the king of Judah is urged not to fight but to leave the battle to the Lord. A copy of the sermon was sent to Tāufa`āhau immediately afterwards.¹¹² Thomas was well aware of the political nature of the struggle on

106 Watkin to GS, WMMS, 24 March 1837, WMMS IC, Friendly Islands, 1836–1837, 1.

107 Thomas, Journal, 6 Jan 1837; William Brooks, Journal, 16 Jan 1837, WMMS IC, Friendly Islands, 1822–1875.

108 Tonga Station Report for 1837, Friendly Islands District Meeting Minutes 1827–1855.

109 Pita Vi, "Campaigns of Tu`i Kānokupolu Tupouto`a and his son Tāufa`āhau 1812–1845", E.W. Gifford, *Tongan Society*, Honolulu 1829, 216.

110 Rabone, Journal, 12 Feb 1837.

111 Charles Tucker, Journal, 3 Feb 1837, WMMS IC, Friendly Islands, 1822–1875.

112 Thomas, Journal, 8 Jan 1837.

Tongatapu and of the fact that some non-Christian chiefs lent their support to Aleamotu`a. It was the military supremacy of Tāufa`āhau that was under threat. Watkin, who remained in Aleamotu`a's fortress at Nuku`alofa, reported that the Hule massacre and other occasions when lives were lost were evidence of "Satan's kingdom being destroyed with great spirit".¹¹³ Two days before the Hule massacre, Thomas preached on Joshua 10, which considers the successful Israelite invasion of Canaan:¹¹⁴ "Joshua conquered the whole land ... He spared no-one; everyone was put to death".¹¹⁵ The war on Tongatapu was nothing less than the struggle of Christianity for supremacy over the forces of darkness.

Since the fortunes of the new religion, politically charged as they were, were destined to be so significant during Ma'afu's career in Fiji, it is useful to consider some reactions to the great loss of life on Tongatapu during the years of his childhood. John Beecham, one of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society's General Secretaries, did not share Thomas' unquestioning support for what he saw as the forces of the Lord, support that Hule did nothing to diminish. In February, Thomas preached on Judges 5:31: "'So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord'". He did not forget to add in his journal: "The people were very attentive".¹¹⁶ Beecham severely condemned Tāufa`āhau's actions in storming the fortress at Hule and slaughtering men, women and children. "That his brother was severely wounded in the earlier assault was not sufficient to authorise a Christian king and a preacher of the Gospel to adopt such a course".¹¹⁷ Here was humanity placed above evangelisation; Beecham, unlike Thomas, was removed from the political arena. By way of contrast, Charles Tucker in Tonga saw mitigating circumstances in a rebel plan to murder Tāufa`āhau and all his army. The king was to be lured inside the fortress on the understanding that the heathen chiefs there wished to embrace the *lotu*. Tāufa`āhau informed Tucker that "while marching toward the fortress ... he had no intention whatever of harming the women and children, `but in a moment it came into his mind to put all to the sword'. He said he believed it was the just judgment of God upon all the people of that place, because of the horrid plan they had formed of murdering him and all the Christians".¹¹⁸

With hindsight born of our knowledge of Tāufa`āhau's long years as king of Tonga, and of the chequered future progress of Christianity in Fiji, we are entitled to treat the chief's explanation, as reported by Tucker, with scepticism. For Tāufa`āhau, the Christian-heathen contest possessed a complex political hue. Civil strife in Tonga had occurred throughout his lifetime; his position

113 Watkin, Journal, 14 Feb 1837.

114 Thomas, Journal, 23 Jan 1837.

115 Joshua 10:40, *The New English Bible*.

116 Thomas, Journal, 19 Feb 1837.

117 John Beecham to Chairman of the Friendly Islands' District, 28 March 1838, WMMS OC, 1834–1838.

118 Tucker, Journal, 22 May 1837, WMMS IC, Friendly Islands, 1822–1875.

as *hau*, involving his inevitable succession as Tu`i Kānokupolu, the traditional opposition to his own family, and the duplicity of sometime allies who had again taken up arms against him, all served to propel Tāufa`āhau along the road to Hule. Nevertheless, “the teachings of the missionaries gave [Tāufa`āhau] a religious-Christian rationale and sanction for prosecuting the war”.¹¹⁹ The incongruity of this Christian king leading his men in prayer before investing Hule and massacring its inhabitants must be seen in the context of the political and religious pressures of the time. Ma`afu, not present at Hule or even then on Tongatapu, would be confronted with similar complexities later in the century in Fiji. There, he was to pursue a career essentially uncompromised by moral ambiguities, a career characterised in far greater measure than his cousin’s by opportunism, unbridled ambition, cunning, outright deception and sometimes violence. This divergence of approach and indeed of philosophy is a reflection of differences of character between the two men rather than the consequence of any inordinate contrast between the political circumstances each of them faced.

With peace seemingly assured, Moala and her children sailed to Ha`apai in April, en route to Tongatapu.¹²⁰ Except for the times such as this when Ma`afu and his family were evacuated from Tongatapu, we know almost nothing of his daily life during his childhood. Although we have good reason to suppose him dutifully attending school when Tongatapu was at peace, we do not know how often he went, or how far he absorbed the mission teachers’ message. We should nonetheless pay some attention to the evolving curriculum to which Ma`afu was exposed, even if only intermittently. The missionaries did not serve a diet of continual death and destruction, unleavened by the gentler message of the Christian gospel. Some of them, at least, were sensitive to the more fundamental teachings of Christianity. Rabone, for example, perhaps in reaction to the slaughter at Hule, decided to concentrate on the themes of mercy and love in his sermons.¹²¹ This message had been heard in Tongan schools at least two years earlier: in February 1835, a translation of part of the Gospel of Matthew was published for use in schools. The small book, which included the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes, “taught the blessings of mercy and peacemaking, and outlined man’s responsibility to his neighbour”.¹²² The parable of the Prodigal Son was also included. Here was a marked contrast with the emphasis on militarism and destruction found in the Old Testament texts. Yet, however determined many of the missionaries might have been to present teachings that highlighted Christian brotherhood, mercy and forgiveness, their school curricula and their sermons inevitably came under the influence of the

119 Cummins, *School and Society...*, 277.

120 Thomas, *Journal*, 17 Apr 1837.

121 Rabone, *Journal*, 12 Feb 1837.

122 Cummins, *School and Society...*, 181. The title of the Tongan publication was *Koe Kosibeli moe tohi e Matiu I IX*, Tongatapu, 1835.

increasing hostility and division within the Tongan social fabric. Faced with the reality of a bitter conflict, the missionaries resorted to a doctrine of “holy war” in both classroom and pulpit. If war there must be, then let the forces of the Lord triumph over those of the heathen. Somewhere among the civil strife and the conflicting messages from the bearers of the *lotu* there moved a small boy, whose reactions to it all must be forever a matter of speculation.

For the moment, in mid 1837, peace prevailed on Tongatapu. The missionaries continued to extol the virtues of Tāufa`āhau “whose very name almost strikes terror into the heathen”. Eulogy was tempered with a pragmatic note of caution: “The Christians have not thought it prudent to remove out of the Fortresses lest their enemies should take advantage of it, and murder many of them”.¹²³ Only Tāufa`āhau and his military strength stood between the survival of both Christianity and Aleamotu`a on the one hand, and anarchy and civil war on the other. At the end of 1837 there arrived on Tongatapu a fleet of 23 canoes, carrying about 2,000 men and led by Tāufa`āhau. “The heathen are afraid”, declared Rabone.¹²⁴ One positive result of this further intervention was the conversion of Tāufa`āhau’s grandfather, Ma`afu of Vaini, one of Tongatapu’s most defiant rebels.¹²⁵ His renunciation of the old gods is typical of much of Aleamotu`a’s rule as Tu`i Kānokupolu: the *lotu* was used as an effective means of diffusing political opposition and avoiding war. Conversion of the recalcitrant chiefs helped to consolidate Aleamotu`a’s precarious position while at the same time preparing a secure power base for his eventual successor, Tāufa`āhau.

Although we do not know whether Ma`afu, aged about 13, was among the 1,067 scholars recorded on Tongatapu in October 1837,¹²⁶ it is likely that his education still owed much to events beyond the classroom walls. While learning the rules of those most fundamental of all political games, the acquisition and preservation of power, Ma`afu lived in his father’s household, which lay inside the fortification at Nuku`alofa. The house and adjoining mission school lay on top of “a gentle acclivity”, that is, Sia-ko-Veiongo.¹²⁷ Nearby, on the path up the hill, lay a drum, “a large hollow log, not unlike a pig trough, made of hard, sonorous wood; it is struck with a mallet [and] gives a sound not unlike a distant gong, and it is said may be heard from seven to ten miles”.¹²⁸ From the summit of Veiongo, part of the view over coastline, lagoon and reef, familiar to Ma`afu as a child, can still be seen. Its position in the time of Aleamotu`a as a natural centre of any communication may easily be appreciated.

123 Tonga Station Report for the Year Ending September 1837, WMMS District Meeting Minutes, Fiji and Friendly Islands, 1827–1855, 3.

124 Rabone, Journal, 7 Dec 1837.

125 *ibid.*, 11 Dec 1837.

126 Minutes, Tonga District Meeting, Lifuka, Ha`apai, 16 Oct 1837, WMMS Tonga District Minutes 1827–1849.

127 Wilkes, 7.

128 *ibid.*, 28.

We are no closer, during these final years of Ma'afu's childhood, to determining to what extent he was influenced by the mission teaching to which he had for so long been exposed. We do know that, in more stable times, the prospects for Christian education had markedly improved. An important innovation was that children were now taught separately from adults.¹²⁹ "All the schools are conducted on strictly religious principles", the Society was assured. "They are invariably concluded with singing and prayer, and are attended by all ranks, from the King and Queen, to the meanest of their subjects, and by persons of all ages, from infancy to hoary hairs".¹³⁰ If we wish to sustain this image, we might picture Ma'afu seated among his peers, now separate from the "hoary hairs", joining in the singing and prayer with relish. When such a report of universal piety, dutifully presented for consumption at home, is considered in the light of political reality in Tonga, we might also record the words of Dante:

Imagination, thou dost so abstract us
That we are not aware, not even when
A thousand trumpets sound about our ears.

The picture of Ma'afu in the mission schools of the late 1830s should rather be sought among other missionary reports, where a more pragmatic, not to say rational, assessment of their educational policy and practice is presented. Many of the Wesleyans were recording increasing discontent with the state of education in Tonga, especially with regard to the schools' lack of appeal for young people. In a surprising admission, the books available, which were mostly Methodist catechisms and extracts from Scripture, were stated to be too few in number and, more significantly, too narrow in content. The schools themselves were seen as more like Sunday schools than day schools, providing additional avenues for worship rather than a secular education.¹³¹ Some missionaries were prepared to advance reasons for this educational dead end that the mission schools had apparently reached. One, which no-one who has read any contemporary missionary journal would doubt, was that because the missionaries were constantly busy with a multitude of tasks, they had insufficient time to devote to pedagogical matters. We might also question whether their training and indeed inclinations enabled them to prepare a curriculum not based entirely on Scripture. Another reason for the impasse in the schools was that the so-called native teachers, Tongans who had received a modicum of instruction in religion and literacy, were inefficient schoolmasters

129 The official report of the state of the Missions and Schools in Tonga, as presented at the District Meeting in October 1837, *WMMS Annual Report*, 1838, 40.

130 *ibid.*

131 See, for example, Ha'apai School Reports for 1836 and 1837, and Tonga School Reports for 1839 to 1841, *WMMS District Meeting Minutes, Fiji and Friendly Islands, 1827–1855*.

because they lacked proper training.¹³² If Ma`afu's school attendance survived his several evacuations from Tongatapu and the disruptions of the island's civil strife, the quality of the education he did receive must be called into question.

Amid anxiety about the future course of mission education, and about the fortunes of the *lotu* as the pendulum of political power swung to and fro, there sometimes emerges from the missionary writings a picture of Aleamotu`a and his family simply as a family, facing the vicissitudes of life. Late in 1837, Charles Tucker recorded in his journal a picture of their intense grief:

I buried one of the king's children, he was 8 months old, a remarkably fine child, taken off after but 4 or 5 days sickness. Most of the people of Nuku`alofa attended the funeral. May the Lord strengthen and console the minds of the afflicted parents ... Mary wept much, Josiah was not present – he is passionately fond of their children.¹³³

This boy, whose name was Lausi`i, was the second of the sons of Aleamotu`a and Moala known to have died in infancy. Their elder surviving son is likely to have been doubly precious to them and, in view of the several mentions by missionaries of Aleamotu`a's fondness for his children, also likely to have been indulged. The picture of Ma`afu at the end of the 1830s is of a wilful boy in his early teens, living under the benign authority, if authority it can be called, of an indolent father and a pious mother, and sometimes attending a mission school whose quality of instruction was dubious and whose future was clouded. The position of the *lotu* on Tongatapu was by no means assured; the heathen chiefs continued to pose a real if quiescent menace, while peace and indeed the survival of Ma`afu's father depended on the good will and active support of Tāufa`āhau, as it always had. The turbulence surrounding the end of Ma`afu's childhood in Tonga may be seen as a harbinger of his future career among the islands of Fiji.

132 Tonga School Report, 1836; Minutes of Special District Meeting, 23 Mar 1841, WMMS District Meeting Minutes, Fiji and Friendly Islands, 1827–1855.

133 Tucker, Journal, 14 Dec 1837, WMMS IC, Friendly Islands, 1836–1837.

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