

2. “Ma`afu...had sailed for Feejee...”

A prelude to the events of the 1840s, the decade when Ma`afu left his homeland, occurred at a ceremony near Neiafu, Vava`u in March 1839. The local chiefs, their *matapule* and many of the district's adult males assembled for the promulgation of a new code of laws prepared by Tāufa`āhau. The laws, already in operation in Vava`u for more than a year, were read to the gathering by Tāufa`āhau, who enlarged upon any requiring explanation.¹ Heavily influenced by the missionaries, they were to be introduced in Ha`apai as well. By implication, Tongatapu waited only for political stability and the conversion of the remaining heathen chiefs before it too was to enjoy the benefits of the code.

Typical of the code's provisions was its fourth paragraph:

my people should live in great peace ... having no wish for war ... therefore I wish you to allow to your people some time for the purpose of working for themselves; they will work for you ... in working your Canoe; in planting your yams, and bananas, and in whatever you may require their services; but ... it is no longer lawful, for you to ... take by force any article from them, but let their things be at their own disposal.²

The code delineates an ordered Christian society, where king, chiefs and people live in mutual obligation, with commoners' rights enshrined in law for the first time. Tongatapu in the early 1840s, the years of Ma`afu's adolescence and young adulthood, was vastly removed from such an ideal condition.

The renewal of hostilities in 1840 echoed the events of three years earlier. Fortresses were prepared owing to “misunderstandings” between Christians and heathens, while keeping the Christians on the right path was difficult “inasmuch as quarrels are principally of a family character”.³ In January, with Aleamotu`a once again preparing to send to Tāufa`āhau for assistance, “confusion and uproar” prevailed everywhere on Tongatapu. Defensive stockades were under construction and houses were being carried into the fortress: “altogether one scene of confusion”.⁴ The immediate cause of Aleamotu`a's appeal to his nephew came on 14 January, when he and his family were visiting Fo`ui, a small, fortified Christian settlement in Hihifo. When four Christians from Fo`ui were murdered while working in their gardens outside the fort, Charles Tucker described the atrocity as “the greatest insult the heathen could offer [Aleamotu`a]”, since it

1 John Thomas, *Journal*, March 1839.

2 A Code of Vava`u, 1839, Sione Latukefu, *Church and State in Tonga*, Honolulu 1974, Appendix A, 223.

3 Stephen Rabone, *Journal*, 31 Dec 1839.

4 *ibid.*, 20 Jan 1840.

occurred while the chief and his family were inside.⁵ Evidence that Aleamotu'a had lost effective control over the Christian chiefs, hitherto his only Tongan supporters, came on 23 January when, during a meeting between himself, Tucker and Stephen Rabone, word came that a Christian man from Fo'ui had left the fort there and killed two of the heathens. This action was a direct defiance of Aleamotu'a, who had ordered the Fo'ui people to remain inside their fortress until the arrival of Tāufa'āhau.⁶

Once again, the fortunes of Christianity were placed in the hands of Tāufa'āhau, whose power as *hau* was under threat from the "confusion and uproar" on Tongatapu. He arrived from Vava'u, accompanied by 30 men, on 25 January and was quickly followed by his "great war vessel" and other large canoes bringing more than 200 warriors.⁷ Tāufa'āhau learned on arrival at Fo'ui that the heathens in their fortress were plotting to kill him. After investing the fortress for almost a fortnight, he entered it and captured more than 500 people, apparently without loss of life. All were pardoned. Realising that his continued presence in Tongatapu was essential, Tāufa'āhau decided to make his residence there and brought "about nine hundred men, with their families, from Ha'apai and Vava'u to reside with him".⁸ Tucker believed that only Tāufa'āhau's actions had prevented an immediate heathen attack on Nuku'alofa.⁹

Tāufa'āhau was now responsible, not only for keeping the Christian cause alive on Tongatapu, but also for the personal safety of Aleamotu'a and his family. It is likely that Ma'afu, then aged about 15, accompanied his parents to Fo'ui in January 1840, since "King Josiah and his family were on a visit there". Aleamotu'a's brother Lasike, known to missionaries as Abraham, took a large party of men to Fo'ui to remove the family to the safety of the fortress at Nuku'alofa.¹⁰ We have no means of assessing the degree of political astuteness that Ma'afu, in personal danger as he was, then possessed. He must have realised that his father's position owed everything to rank and nothing to power, and that the *hau*, whose support was vital to the ageing Aleamotu'a, would inevitably replace him. This uneasy relationship between rank and power had existed since Aleamotu'a's investiture as Tu'i Kānokupolu, after which he and Tāufa'āhau were often referred to in documented sources as "the two kings". When the United States Exploring Expedition reached Tongatapu in April 1840, Commodore Charles Wilkes received the "two kings" on board the expedition's flagship. "Their majesties were both naked, except the tapa wound

5 Charles Tucker to GS, WMMS 15 Apr 1840, WMN, New Series, No. 25, Jan 1841, 420–421.

6 Rabone, Journal, 23 Jan 1840.

7 *ibid.*, 25 Jan 1840; Pita Vi, "Campaigns of Tu'i Kānokupolu Tupouto'a and his son Tāufa'āhau 1812–1845", E.W. Gifford, *Tongan Society*, Honolulu 1929, 217–218.

8 Tucker to GS, WMMS, 15 Apr 1840; Rabone, Journal, 1–8 Feb 1840.

9 For detailed accounts of Tāufa'āhau's short campaign, see Tucker and Vi.

10 Tucker to GS, 15 Apr 1840.

round their waists ... They left the ship highly delighted with their presents and visit".¹¹ Social niceties aside, both "kings" continued to face the heathen menace and Wilkes was quickly asked by Tucker to "use his influence to bring about peace".¹² With fighting again occurring at Hihifo, Wilkes came on shore for a second meeting with the "kings", this time to consider how peace might be re-established. The meeting, which took place inside Aleamotu`a's "small hut" within the fort at Nuku`alofa, had much to say about the future course of political power in Tonga.

While Aleamotu`a and other Tongatapu Christian chiefs conferred inside the hut, Wilkes, in company with Tucker and Rabone, waited outside for Tāufa`āhau to arrive. Wilkes afterwards praised that chief's demeanour and physical appearance, observing that Tāufa`āhau possessed the presence of one used to command. The chief nevertheless seated himself outside the hut because, as Tucker explained, Tāufa`āhau was not yet considered a native chief of Tongatapu. Tradition demanded he be seated among the common people. Because Wilkes knew Tāufa`āhau to be the "ruling chief de facto" in Tongatapu, he requested his admission to the hut. After being duly requested by his uncle to enter, Tāufa`āhau sat himself "at a respectful distance from the king, to whom he showed great and marked respect".¹³ Here, as at the investiture of Aleamotu`a as Tu`i Kānokupolu more than 12 years before, Tāufa`āhau knew his rightful place. Now, even though absolute power was already his, he was still content to wait.

The meeting resolved to convene a gathering of heathen and Christian chiefs, under Wilkes' chairmanship, on the island of Pangai in the Nuku`alofa lagoon, for the purpose of negotiating peace. In the event, only one supposedly heathen chief presented himself, only to decamp with his followers after two days.¹⁴ The American expedition then left for Fiji, Wilkes having been unsuccessful in his role as mediator. Ma`afu remained inside his father's compound surrounding Sia-ko-Veiongo, where he witnessed much more than the scenes of "confusion and uproar" so painful to the missionaries. On his visit to the compound, Wilkes had noted "large numbers of warriors, all grotesquely dressed and ready [to] ... fight, with clubs, spears and muskets".¹⁵ More pertinent to Tonga's future was the "town" which Tāufa`āhau was building "just without the fortification of King Josiah".¹⁶ The presence of the most powerful chief in Tonga was more than an outward and visible commitment to the cause of Aleamotu`a and Christianity. Wilkes correctly read the political writing on the wall when he

11 Charles Wilkes, *United States Exploring Expedition...*, Vol. 3, Fiji Museum Group Reprint, Suva 1985, 21. "King George" had been given a "handsome fowling piece", while "King Josiah" received a red silk umbrella, "which highly delighted him".

12 Tucker, *Journal*, 25 Apr 1840, *WMN*, New Series, No. 25, Jan 1841, 422–423.

13 Wilkes, 9.

14 Rabone, *Journal*, 28 Apr 1840.

15 Wilkes, 8.

16 *ibid.*, 13.

observed: “the permanency and arrangement with which the town is laid out make Tāufa`āhau’s intention quite evident”.¹⁷ Construction of the “town” was a preparation for the day when Tāufa`āhau would assume in law the authority that, for most practical purposes, he already possessed.

Because of the assistance received from Tāufa`āhau, Aleamotu`a gave his nephew “land, and half the village of Nuku`alofa”, including a broad sea frontage. “There are therefore now two large fences at this place”, Thomas duly recorded, “the one called the old, and the other the new fort, the old is in the occupancy of Josiah and his people, the other King George and his [chiefs] and their wives and families live in. This arrangement is said to be highly offensive to some of the heathen chiefs”.¹⁸ Despite such manifestations of power, Tāufa`āhau “did not consider [the] Nuku`alofa people as belonging to him but rather to Josiah”.¹⁹ Tāufa`āhau’s professions of humility continued to reflect a traditional power structure in which the *hau* deferred to a ranking chief.

The situation on Tongatapu quickly deteriorated after the brief interlude provided by the visit of the American expedition. On 5 May, “war” broke out afresh on Tongatapu, while next day came news of a plot to kill Setaleki Mumui, a nephew of Aleamotu`a who was considered by some as a possible successor.²⁰ During the following month Peter Turner, a Wesleyan missionary working in Ha`apai, recorded the arrival of five canoes from Tongatapu, en route to Vava`u, whence they would bring as many men as possible to aid Tāufa`āhau’s cause. “The heathens are determined on war and on their own destruction [sic]”, Turner declared. In Fiji, three canoes were being built; “when they shall be finished many Tonguese may be expected to return home”. On Tongatapu, Europeans were anxiously awaiting the arrival of the Wesleyan mission ship *Triton* so that they could be evacuated. “The schools and society are torn to pieces”, Turner lamented.²¹ The situation there appeared more dangerous than at any time during Ma`afu’s brief life. He was, of course, still too young to play any part, political or military, in the affairs of his troubled island.

During these critical weeks, Ma`afu probably remained inside the fortress at Nuku`alofa. Fearful of heathen incursions, his father “with other old chiefs ... slept outside [the mission’s] gates” on the night of 17–18 June, although Tāufa`āhau, investing the heathen fortress at Vaini, returned before any harm could befall his uncle. Two days later both chiefs, supported by Rabone and Tucker, sought help from Commander Walter Croker, captain of the visiting

17 *ibid.*

18 Thomas, *Tongatapu or the Friendly Islands*, 1237–1238.

19 Rabone, *Journal*, 1 May 1840.

20 Thomas, *Journal*, 5–6 May 1840.

21 Peter Turner, *Journal*, 1–22 June 1840.

British sloop of war *Favourite*.²² On 24 June, Croker and about 100 of his men, in an act of supreme folly, accompanied Tāufa`āhau and his forces to the heathen stronghold at Pea where, in the ensuing affray, Croker was killed.²³ One result of this affair, according to Peter Turner, was that "the prowess of England is considerably lessened ... and the natives only think more of their own skill".²⁴ Despite this blow to English, and by implication missionary, prestige, Croker's death was followed by an uneasy calm. When John Thomas, stationed at Vava`u, arrived at Tongatapu on 21 July, he found the island at peace. The day before he returned to Vava`u in August, he received Aleamotu`a at the mission in Nuku`alofa. "To all appearances peace is settled", the missionary recorded. "There has not been any war since the day I landed here, and I think the Lord has disposed both heathens and Christians to be at peace".²⁵

A curious aside to these events occurred in June 1840, when missionary Joseph Waterhouse, visiting Vava`u, recorded that "King Josiah, feeling himself unable to contend with the wicked Heathen who have so long been threatening him, has resigned his throne in favour of his relative George, King of Vavou [sic]".²⁶ Waterhouse misunderstood the relationship between uncle and nephew or, in political terms, between rank and power. His colleague Rabone referred to the essentially family character of the disputes between Christian and heathen and condemned the warlike disposition of people who had been Christians for only a few years.²⁷ Thomas deplored violence as a means of propagating the faith; according to him, "where persecution begins, Christianity ends".²⁸ While most commentators saw the events at Fo`ui, the destruction of the heathen spirit houses by Tāufa`āhau's forces and the deliberate burning of the Fo`ui chapel by a Christian man as immediate causes of the fighting,²⁹ the events of the first half of 1840 must be considered in a broader context. For Ma`afu, who rated no mention in any account of the wars, the broader context defined his political future and was eventually to send him permanently beyond the shores of Tonga.

Ma`afu remained confined within his father's compound at Sia-ko-Veiongo, whose surrounding fence and a deep trench symbolised the intense religious divide between Aleamotu`a and his heathen relatives. While Tu`i Kānokupolu fortified his home because he feared for the safety of himself and his family, the heathen

22 Friendly Islands District Meeting Minutes, Lifuka, 23 Mar 1841.

23 Rabone, Journal, 24–25 June 1840.

24 Turner, 6 July 1840.

25 Thomas, Journal, 13 Aug 1840.

26 "Journal of Mr Waterhouse's Voyage to the Polynesian islands, and return to Hobart Town", *WMN*, New Series, No. 29, May 1841, 503.

27 Rabone, Journal, 18 Dec 1839 and 22 Jan 1840.

28 Thomas, Journal, 4 Sep 1840.

29 For example, Thomas, Journal, 16 Nov 1840; Sarah Farmer, *Tonga and the Friendly Islands with a sketch of their Mission History, for young people...*, London 1855, 316–318.

chiefs saw the defences as a declaration of war.³⁰ The conflict's chief protagonist, Tāufa'āhau, aware that the contest would decide the fate of Christianity on Tongatapu, was determined to avoid the bloodshed of the last serious clashes three years earlier. Before the attack on Fo'ui, Tāufa'āhau explained to his warriors that during the 1837 war they had not "fought as Christians should fight" and urged them not to shoot or strike "but in case of life and death".³¹ For Wilkes, the war was "in great measure a religious contest, growing out of the zeal the missionaries have to propagate the gospel and convert the heathen".³² We might wonder if this summation is entirely justified, in view of Tāufa'āhau's warning to his forces and Thomas' later denunciation of "persecution" in the name of Christianity. Wilkes, however, recognised the link between Christianity and the political pressures of the day. "With this [religious contest] is combined the desire of ... Tāufa'āhau, who is already master of Ha'apai and Vavao [sic], to possess himself of all the islands of the group".³³ Considering his short stay in Tonga, Wilkes' analysis is remarkably pertinent. For him, "the missionaries and [Tāufa'āhau] were mutually serving each other's cause".³⁴ The inhabitants of Tongatapu, whom other Tongans had always respected, were now threatened with subjugation by those same people. Wilkes observed that "such feelings are enough to make them war against any innovation in their social polity and laws".³⁵

Incisive though these comments are concerning the situation on Tongatapu, they fail to reflect the complex causes of the wars of the 1830s, wars occasioned by the power struggle already in progress for half a century. The same power struggle resulted in Aleamotu'a's elevation to the rank of Tu'i Kānokupolu and would ultimately exclude the young Ma'afu from a share in the evolving polity of his native land. Our knowledge of his life during this time of turbulence is inevitably limited by the paucity of documented references to him in the decade following his baptism in January 1830, beyond mentions of the cosy domesticity of his family life.³⁶ Ma'afu, though, was soon to leave behind the comforts of his parental home. John Thomas, who arrived at Tongatapu from Vava'u in July, was summoned to meet Aleamotu'a, Lasike and Tāufa'āhau at Sia-ko-Veiongo. "After much time spent in consultation, it was agreed to send early on Monday morning a person to the heathen chiefs, proposing peace. In this I rejoice".³⁷ The subject of the men's deliberation was presumably the forthcoming negotiations with the heathen. Neither on this day nor the next

30 Thomas, *Tongatapu or the Friendly Islands*, 1236–1237.

31 Tucker to GS, WMMS, 15 Apr 1840.

32 Wilkes, 10.

33 *ibid.*

34 *ibid.*, 12.

35 *ibid.*, 17.

36 For example, Wilkes, 8–9.

37 Thomas, *Journal*, 25 July 1840.

did Thomas make any mention of an event of major significance in Aleamotu`a's family that would occur the following week. Thomas' journal for Wednesday 29 July contains this somewhat laconic entry:

At 10 o'clock a very large concourse of people assembled at the Sia where after singing and prayer I married Henery Ma`afu King Josiah's eldest son to Elenoa Gatailupe, the sister to Queen Charlotte, after which I preached on Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all things shall be added unto you".³⁸

Contemporaries must have seen Ma`afu's marriage as a very suitable alliance, as much for its implied political strategy as for the respective ranks of the parties concerned. There is unfortunately no record of the discussions that brought it about. The ceremony took place in the presence of "a very large assembly of friends from various parts of the Kingdom", although Aleamotu`a was not among them. Because it was "war time", the feast "was only on a small scale, being ... about twelve roasted hogs, with other things prepared for the occasion".³⁹

Ma`afu and Elenoa Gataialupe were distantly related by blood: both were descended from Mataeleha`amea, fourth holder of the Tu`i Kānokupolu title, who first made the title one of significance outside Tongatapu. Of greater importance in 1840 was the fact that Elenoa was the half-sister of Lupepau`u, known to Europeans as Queen Charlotte, the Christian wife of Tāufa`āhau. Ma`afu, probably no more than 16, gained as a brother-in-law the man in whose hands supreme power in Tonga effectively lay. Both men acquired status from their wives, since Elenoa and Lupepau`u were great-granddaughters, through the female line, of the Tu`i Tonga Fefine Siumafua`uta.⁴⁰ The union of Ma`afu and Elenoa was political in nature. Although related by blood to Tāufa`āhau, Ma`afu acquired further status through his close alliance, through marriage, with the *hau*. That status was enhanced by his wife's descent from a Tu`i Tonga Fefine, the highest-ranking woman in Tonga. It is highly significant that both Ma`afu and Tāufa`āhau, men who already enjoyed relatively high status through birth, were considered to have gained rank through their respective marriages. Although contemporary evidence is lacking, it is likely that Aleamotu`a and Tāufa`āhau arranged the marriage as a means of strengthening their own alliance amid the political turbulence of the times.

38 *ibid.*, 29 July 1840.

39 Thomas, *Tongatapu or the Friendly Islands*, 1260.

40 Siumafua`uta's daughter, Lapulo`u, grandmother of Elenoa and Lupepau`u, was a wife of Finau Ulukālala II, the *hau* of his day. He is well known in Tongan history partly because of his prominent place in William Mariner's account of his four-year stay in the islands. See John Martin, ed., *Tonga Islands: William Mariner's Account*, fifth edition, Nuku`alofa 1991. See also Elizabeth Bott, *Tongan Society at the Time of Captain Cook's visits. Discussions with Her Majesty Queen Sālote Tupou*, Wellington 1982, 151.

In view of Ma`afu's marriage and of the dislocation of society after the fighting in 1840, we may suppose that his formal education was over. In May, Sarah Thomas, wife of the missionary, recorded the arrival in Nuku`alofa of two canoes from Fiji. "The king's son Henele Ma`afu is [in] one of the last canoes", Mrs Thomas noted. Apparently one of the canoes had been sent to fetch Ma`afu home, following a probably lengthy stay in Fiji.⁴¹ We have no indication of the purpose of the visit, except that the presence in Fiji of a young Tongan of high rank was not unusual. Ma`afu had probably spent some of his time at Lakeba with his kinsman Tui Nayau, paramount chief of that island and nominal ruler of southern Lau. There is a tradition from Lakeba and from neighbouring Nayau that, if true, does much to explain Ma`afu's eagerness to visit those islands. While in Lau, Ma`afu apparently spent some time in the village of Liku, on Nayau, where he became enamoured of a girl named Kisiana, the daughter of a chief, Tui Naro. Ma`afu and Kisiana had a son named Kateni, whose descendants are supposedly still to be found in Lau.⁴² This undocumented tradition cannot be placed in any particular year. Yet, only six months after Ma`afu was brought home from Fiji, he made a sudden and unexpected departure for those shores again. On 5 November 1841, Thomas recorded in Nuku`alofa:

Yesterday about 3 o'clock it was known ... that Ma`afu, the King's son and two others he calls his sons, had sailed for Feejee, without informing their parents and friends of it. ... I fear the war has so dissipated [the young men's] minds ... A canoe is now to be got ready to follow the runaways, to take them some property which will be useful to them at Fejees – thus many more will be leaving us, at least for some time, and others fear that as there is war at Fejees, some will not return again.⁴³

The departure of the pursuit canoe on 9 November was accompanied by "great crying" by those left behind.⁴⁴ While the missionary ascribed Ma`afu's eagerness to depart to the exigencies of wars in both Tonga and Fiji, we are entitled to speculate about other reasons for Ma`afu to leave his family and friends. Perhaps little blame can be assigned to the impulsive adolescent for seeking refuge from political and social turbulence, as well as a meddling missionary. By 18 November Ma`afu, his companions in adventure and their pursuers had all reached Lakeba, where missionary Thomas Williams was in no doubt of the visitors' purpose. When Williams returned to Lakeba on 17 November, following a visit to Oneata, he encountered all the Tongan canoes. "The parties are fugitives", Williams wrote of the canoes' occupants, "sons of

41 Sarah Thomas, *Journal*, May 1841.

42 Noqu Yavutu, *Nayau*, Suva 1994, 94.

43 Thomas, *Journal*, 5 Nov 1841.

44 *ibid.*, 9 Nov 1841.

the Tonga King, two chiefs with their canoes sent in pursuit of them".⁴⁵ We do not know when Ma`afu returned from this his second precipitate expedition to Fiji within a year, although he is unlikely to have been long delayed. We next encounter him in July 1842, working with friends on the seafront in Nuku`alofa, building a large canoe.⁴⁶

Ma`afu's apparently quiet existence following his return from Fiji might be seen as the calm before yet another storm. The months of September and October 1842 represent the first period of his life when we have a variety of documented references, some of them detailed, to his activities. The events of those months are best prefaced by the words of missionary George Turner, in the service of the London Missionary Society, who spent several fruitless months on Tanna, in the New Hebrides, before being forced to flee the island in January 1843.⁴⁷ Writing more than 40 years later, Turner made reference to the sorry history of the sandalwood trade on the neighbouring island of Erromango. "About fifty years after the visit of Captain Cook [to the New Hebrides], it became known that sandal wood was plentiful on Eromango [sic]", Turner recorded. He mentioned the high prices paid for sandalwood in India and China, incentive enough for vessels to visit the New Hebrides in search of the exotic commodity. "Some captains tried to get it by fair dealing with the natives", Turner wrote, "but others landed with armed force, plundered their plantations and shot as many as they could who opposed them".⁴⁸ The earliest expedition of any size had sailed under the command of Samuel Pinder Henry, son of LMS missionary William Henry and friend of Aleamotu`a. Henry's ship, the *Sophia*, called at Tongatapu in 1829 and recruited 95 Tongans, apparently after Henry had "begged" Aleamotu`a "to give him men to go to the islands to cut sandalwood".⁴⁹ On Erromango, while maintaining mostly peaceful relations with the local people, Henry's party cut great quantities of sandalwood.⁵⁰ After selling his cargo at Honolulu, Henry emerged from the expedition at a loss. Despite further similar contacts, the New Hebrides in the early 1840s were still reputed to be islands of disease, danger and malevolence.⁵¹

George Turner's indignation concerning the activities of the sandalwood traders was first committed to paper in June 1843 when, five months after his return from

45 Thomas Williams, *The Journal of Thomas Williams, missionary in Fiji 1840–1853*, ed. by G.C. Henderson, Sydney 1931, Vol. 1, 47 (18 Nov 1841).

46 John E. Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise among the Islands of the western Pacific...*, London 1853, 143–144.

47 The New Hebrides were renamed Vanuatu when the islands achieved independence in 1980.

48 George Turner, *Eromanga*, [written 13 Nov 1885], LMS, South Seas Personal, Box 1, Folders 7–9.

49 Statement of Tingea [a former *matapule* to Ma`afu and resident on Vanuabalavu, Fiji], 8 Mar 1881. "Notes [?by C.R. Swayne] ... on early Fijian history and Ma`afu", in G.K. Roth, Papers.

50 The English naturalist George Bennett, who sailed on board the *Sophia*, published a detailed account of the expedition: "Account of the islands Erromanga and Tanna, New Hebrides Group", *Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 7, Jan-Apr 1832, 119–131, quoted in Dorothy Shineberg, *They came for Sandalwood*, Melbourne 1967, 17.

51 I am indebted to Shineberg for this account of the early sandalwood voyages to the New Hebrides.

Tanna to Samoa, he wrote to John Thomas in Tonga.⁵² Turner was disturbed by reports of a second expedition that, like its predecessor, had called at Tongatapu for the purpose of recruitment. He found a sympathetic ear in Thomas, who described the expedition as “a very grievous affair to us”.⁵³ Thomas had become aware of the proposed voyage in late July 1842, when he returned to Tongatapu from a missionary meeting at Vava`u. He found lying at anchor, not only HBM sloop *Favourite*, commanded by Captain Sullivan, but also the schooner *Sophia*, Captain Samuel Henry, an English vessel called the *Sultan*, Captain Scott and the *O.C. Raymond*, Captain Dennison, “said to be an American”. Sullivan, aware that the other three vessels were about to sail to the New Hebrides in order to obtain sandalwood, expressed his suspicions “concerning them and their designs” to Thomas.⁵⁴ The missionary needed no persuasion to set himself against the proposed venture.

Thomas’ misgivings began the day he returned to Tongatapu. Although the *Favourite* had left two days earlier, the three sandalwood ships remained in port, their captains even attending service in the Wesleyan chapel at Nuku`alofa on Sunday 24 July, when Thomas preached in English. For the missionary, a crisis was fast approaching: the next day, he recorded that Aleamotu`a had “ordered his men to go with Captain Henry, to cut sandal wood, though about eighty died when he took some fourteen years ago ... Our King does many things he ought not as a Christian to do”. On this occasion, Ma`afu was one of about 60 young Tongans recruited by Henry. Later in the week, Thomas asked Aleamotu`a what the expedition’s precise objectives were. “The King” requested his friend to write to Henry “to ask him how long they expected the men to work for him, and how they were to get back again home”. Thomas was indignant that the “King” should permit 55 young men to be absent during planting time, “and one his own eldest Son – without knowing when they were to come back, or how”.⁵⁵ As for the “eldest Son”, there is evidence that his father made some attempt to keep him at home. “Ma`afu was then a youth”, declared his former *matapule* Tingea in Fiji almost 40 years later. “[Aleamotu`a] did not want him to go but he went”.⁵⁶

Ma`afu almost certainly took a more active role in the recruitment than Tingea’s terse statement suggests. When Captain John Erskine, commanding HMS *Havannah*, visited Tonga in 1851, he interviewed a young chief named Methuselah Tae on the subject of the 1842 expedition. Tae, who was warned by his superior Setaleki Mumui, a high-ranking chief, magistrate and cousin

52 Turner’s letter to Thomas has apparently not survived. Thomas referred to it in his reply, written at his station on Tongatapu in 1845: Thomas to George Turner, 17 Feb 1845, LMS SSL, Box 18.

53 *ibid.*

54 Thomas to GS, WMMS, 8 Jun 1843, WMMS Tonga IL.

55 Thomas, Journal, 21–27 July 1842.

56 Statement of Tingea.

of Ma`afu, to speak the truth, "told his tale in the presence of the chiefs, the missionaries, and an assemblage of his countrymen, several of whom had been his companions [on the expedition]". According to Tae, Ma`afu was building a large canoe when Captain Henry arrived on Tongatapu. He readily engaged with Henry to recruit 60 men who were subsequently distributed evenly between the three vessels.⁵⁷ Although, in later years, Ma`afu made no reference to such an active role, there is no reason to disbelieve Tae's account, given as it was before an audience likely to have been aware of any deviation from the truth. Indeed, Ma`afu's recruitment of woodcutters for Henry was still spoken of in the Pacific more than 30 years later. In 1874, New Zealand trader Handley Sterndale, in an official report to the then colony's Prime Minister, Julius Vogel, wrote of Ma`afu's having begun "active life in 1842, by hiring himself and small companies of his people to unprincipled trading captains".⁵⁸

At the time, Thomas probably knew little or nothing of Ma`afu's recruitment role, since the expedition's ships had been at Nuku`alofa for an unknown period before the missionary's return. Although Aleamotu`a must have been aware of his son's activities, he made no mention of them when questioned by Thomas about the expedition. Before Thomas responded to Aleamotu`a's request that he write to the captain, Henry himself arrived and promised both "king" and missionary that the men would not be required for more than five months. Thomas later laid particular emphasis on the strength of Henry's reassurance: "if he could not obtain the sandalwood, he would not on any account take a stick of it – he promised me that he would purchase the wood – or not have it at all".⁵⁹ Writing to his colleague almost three years after the events, Thomas clearly wished to stress Samuel Henry's duplicity. Whatever faith he placed at the time in Henry's assurances, he expressed to the captain his concern that he had neither been consulted nor given an opportunity to address the men. Thomas could not conceal his displeasure that events were quickly moving beyond his control.

Henry smoothed the missionary's ruffled feathers by immediately asking him to address the men prior to their embarkation. Thomas did so, with Aleamotu`a present, "for what purpose I know not ... He most certainly wishes to be a kind of god to the people, and acts with no regard either to the good of their bodies or their souls ... he could not have done a more untimely or unseemly thing, as far as the good of his country or of his family is concerned". Thomas assured the men that he had had nothing to do with their departure. Then the ships set sail, accompanied by much crying and firing of muskets from the shore and

57 Erskine, 143–144.

58 H.B. Sterndale to Hon. J. Vogel, 28 Mar 1874, *Confederation and Annexation Papers relating to the Pacific islands generally...*, Wellington 1884, 22.

59 Thomas to Turner, 17 Feb 1845.

by return volleys from the vessels' guns. At 4 p.m., Thomas preached in the Nuku'alofa chapel on 2 Samuel 22:4: "I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies". For Thomas, the enemies of his flock were not to be found among the savage islands of the New Hebrides.⁶⁰

Thomas Williams on Lakeba recorded some unusual excitement on 1 August 1842. While visiting the island's north coast, he heard of the arrival of four vessels off Tubou, Lakeba's chiefly village in the south. Setting off quickly to walk the seven miles to Tubou, Williams at length recognised the mission ship *Triton* on one of its occasional visits. "I ... was at a loss what to make of the rest", he observed. "I found on enquiry that they were on their way to the New Hebrides in search of sandalwood, and had called here in hopes of increasing the numbers of Tonguese natives they had on board to serve as woodcutters".⁶¹ Williams recorded no disembarkation from the ships, nor did he mention any augmentation in the woodcutters' numbers. Captain Henry, apparently considering the 60 or so men recruited at Tongatapu insufficient for his purpose, hoped to obtain others from among the large Tongan community on Lakeba. That he was unsuccessful seems to be confirmed by Williams' failure to mention any local recruitment and by later comments by Dr Berthold Seemann, the botanist who accompanied Colonel William Smythe on his visit to Fiji in 1860, when the question of the island's cession to Great Britain was under consideration. Seemann, who met Ma'afu in Fiji, stated that no recruits were procured at Lakeba.⁶² Perhaps more reliable is the evidence of George McLean, mate on board the *Sophia*, who later wrote that "sixty natives" had been recruited at Tongatapu. When the fleet reached Erromango in September, after a brief stop at Tanna, "our natives seventy in number went on shore to cut sandle wood [sic]", recorded McLean.⁶³ It is likely that the ten additional cutters were Tahitians, who are known to have been part of the expedition from its inception. While it is possible that the call at Lakeba was made at Ma'afu's suggestion, Samuel Henry would have needed no prompting. He had visited the island in 1829, when he met Malani, then Tui Nayau, and conveyed the news that the Christian teachers whom Tui Nayau had been expecting were detained in Tonga. Tui Nayau entreated Henry to find another teacher, which the captain eventually did, bringing a Tahitian named Tahara'a to Lakeba the following year.⁶⁴ It is likely that Henry also knew Malani's brother and successor, Taliai Tupou, who was Lakeba's ruling chief when Henry returned in 1842.

60 Thomas, Journal, 27 July 1842.

61 Thomas Williams, *The Journal of Thomas Williams...*, 93 (1 Aug 1842).

62 Berthold Seemann, *Viti; an Account of a Government Mission to the Vitian or Fijian Islands*, London 1862, 241–242. Seemann's source appears to have been not information from Ma'afu, but the account of Erskine's voyage in the *Havannah*, published in 1853.

63 George McLean to Archibald Murray, 27 Dec 1843, LMS SSL, Box 16.

64 John Davies, *The History of the Tahitian Mission 1799–1830*, ed. by Colin Newbury, Hakluyt Society, Series II, Cambridge 1961, 291–292.

In 1850, while visiting Bau, Fiji, Ma'afu was questioned about the 1842 expedition by Lieutenant Walter Pollard, commander of HMS *Bramble*, which accompanied the *Havannah* for much of its Pacific cruise. He informed Pollard that precisely 67 Tongans had been recruited at Tongatapu.⁶⁵ If the assertion that he was instrumental in the cutters' recruitment is true, Ma'afu must have been aware how many were engaged. Methuselah Tae also stated that no one was taken on board at Lakeba. The expedition duly left the island on 3 August, soon parting company with the *Triton*. Hoping to find his fortune in the New Hebrides, Henry was to earn only ignominy and permanent alienation from the missionary cause.

With the exception of Thomas' brief reference to the "eldest Son" of the "king", none of the contemporary sources makes any mention of Ma'afu prior to the fleet's arrival in the New Hebrides. The story of the events of September and October, when the fleet visited three New Hebridean islands, can be very simply told. Arriving first at Port Resolution in Tanna, Henry was effectively discouraged by two "Reverend gentlemen [who] came on board and informed us that we could not get any sandalwood [sic] on Tana without much difficulty".⁶⁶ The "reverend gentlemen" were George Turner and his missionary colleague Henry Nisbet, who fled Tanna only three months later, owing to the local people's hostility. Not usually open to dissuasion by missionaries, Captain Henry must have anticipated easier pickings elsewhere.

On Erromango, the next island they visited, the ships anchored in Dillon's Bay, where LMS missionary John Williams had been murdered three years earlier. This time the locals appeared friendly, coming off in canoes with bows and arrows which they traded for fishhooks.⁶⁷ The woodcutters landed and for three days worked harmoniously with the Erromangans, who helped them cut and carry sandalwood. On the fourth day a "disturbance" arose following the theft of three axes by natives. The Tongans shot one of the thieves, Erskine wrote,⁶⁸ while according to McLean, who might have witnessed the events, men, women and children were killed "at 4 o'clock p.m. All that side of the island was a continual blaze of fire, [the Tongans] burnt ... villages, sugar cane in fact all of their cultivations were destroyed, [and] their coconut trees were cut down with axes". The murder and destruction continued for a fortnight and McLean, writing some 14 months later, was specific in assigning guilt:

I blame the masters of the vessels for encouraging the Tongatapu people to act as they did in giving them ammunition to kill the natives; I being mate of Captain Henry's vessel, the Tahitian natives belonging to our

65 Erskine, 145, n. 1.

66 McLean to Murray.

67 *ibid.*

68 Erskine, 145, n. 1.

vessel gave me an exact account of every transaction ashore some days they killed five natives more or less every day four natives swam off and begged of us not to kill them and made signs they would assist us in cutting and carrying wood.⁶⁹

In contrast with this detailed account, Ma`afu stated to Lieutenant Pollard only that the cutters “had several rows with the natives, and that one of the Tonga men was wounded and afterwards died”. According to Ma`afu, “the reason for leaving Eromango was, that they were getting short of provisions, and were afraid to take any from the natives”.⁷⁰ While Ma`afu naturally attached no blame to himself for the incidents, it is interesting that he also sought to absolve the ships’ masters from responsibility.⁷¹

The expedition sailed northwards to Efate, then generally known to Europeans as Sandwich Island or Lavelave, where it arrived on 19 October. “We anchored in a beautiful bay”, George McLean wrote,

And on sailing round this island we discovered beautiful harbours and bays and thousands of natives dancing on the sandy beach pointing their arrows and spears as we sailed along. It is without doubt the finest island that I have seen in the South Seas ... but two days after we arrived ... it bore a different aspect, their villages were all burnt, gardens and fences destroyed [and there were] killed upwards of a hundred natives in a short time”.⁷²

McLean was disturbed by the contrast between the peace and beauty of Efate and the horrors perpetrated there by the visiting Tongans. On this occasion, consideration of the details of the atrocities reveals Ma`afu as an active participant.

The most reliable account of the Tongans’ stay on Efate appears to be that of Methuselah Tae. He told Erskine that the Tongan cutters were given arms before landing to commence work, while the white men remained on board the vessels. Before long, for reasons not stated by Tae, a battle ensued, in which 26 unarmed natives were killed, with no injury to the Tongans. Not satisfied with their bloody victory, the intruders pursued the surviving Erromangans to a fort, which was stormed and taken, involving further loss of life. Those still alive escaped to a small island off the northern coast of Efate, where they took refuge in a cave. Their fate can be told in Erskine’s account of Tae’s words:

69 McLean to Murray.

70 Erskine, 145, n. 1.

71 As a consequence of this and other raids by ships’ crews in search of sandalwood, the Erromangans developed strategies designed to sabotage sandalwood expeditions before the crews even reached shore. See “Second Voyage of the ‘John Williams’ from England”, *Samoan Reporter*, September 1848, 3–4, FO 58/65.

72 McLean to Murray.

they hid themselves in a cave, whither they were pursued by Ma`afu and his party. After firing into the cave, ... the besiegers, pulling down some neighbouring houses, piled the materials into a heap at its mouth, and, setting fire to it, suffocated them all. In spite of this occurrence, and the remonstrances of Ma`afu, who was tired of this warfare, Tae declared that Henry ... kept them cutting wood for three days longer before he would accede to their wish to return to Tonga, which they ultimately did, bringing with them four Erromangans.⁷³

Tae's account, detailed though it is concerning the sequence of events, says nothing of their cause. Fortunately, during the visit of HMS *Havannah* to Efate in September 1851, Erskine was able to interview two local men who vividly remembered the affray. The account of those men, named by Erskine as Talipoa-uia and Tongalulu,⁷⁴ agreed in essentials with that of Tae. The men recalled that the ships' captains had obtained permission for the Tongans to cut and remove sandalwood, in exchange for "a regular payment". Peace was shattered by the "arrogance" of the visitors, who forcibly removed coconuts, then under *tabu*, and sang songs meant to insult their hosts. Talipoa-uia and Tangaloa affirmed that the ensuing conflict resulted in the deaths of 40 people from one side of what is now known as Havannah Harbour and 20 on the other.⁷⁵ The men also spoke of the suffocation of their fellows and agreed that eight bodies in all were found, six in one cave and two in another.⁷⁶ Ma`afu would vouchsafe to Pollard only that when the Tongans were returning to their camp one evening after cutting wood, they were "annoyed" by the natives, whom they subsequently drove into a cave, where all but two were suffocated. He professed himself ignorant of the number killed. In an assertion lent credence by the other participants stating that the Europeans remained on board ship, Ma`afu informed Pollard "that the masters of the vessels had nothing whatever to say to it and ... were much displeased when they heard of it".⁷⁷

Ma`afu's son Siale`ataongo, asked by a visitor to Tonga in the 1860s what he knew of the sandalwood expedition, provided a detailed if hearsay account. After reaching Efate, the ships

73 Erskine, 144–145. See also "The New Hebrides, New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands", enc. 4 in J.E. Erskine to Admiralty, 10 Oct 1849, Adm.1/5606, PRO Reel 3303. The island where the cave was located was either Moso or Lelepa, islands which lie off the north coast of Efate. There is an unsubstantiated and unsourced account of Ma`afu's involvement in similar suffocation and murder, years later, on Vanuabalavu. See "Sundowner" [H. Tichborne], *Rambles in Polynesia*, London 1897, 45–46.

74 These men were almost certainly Tongolumanu, a chief from Leosa village on Lelepa, and Taripoa Wia, probably from Moso. Dr Chris Ballard, pers. comm.

75 The northern shore of the harbour is formed by the southern coast of Moso island.

76 Erskine, 326–327.

77 *ibid.*, 145, n. 1.

anchored in Havannah Harbour and at Sama [sic] the principal village there, they turned themselves loose – they were all well armed with firearms, and robbed and plundered at will – they fought the Efatese, of whom `Moafu' and his Tongans killed 26. Then the Efatese built a fort – but this was stormed, taken and the defenders butchered. Those who escaped retreated to Deception island at the entrance to the bay and hid in a cave there. The Tongans followed them, fired into the cave, then pushing down some houses piled them up at the entrance to the cave set it on fire and suffocated the lot – the vessels got their loads of sandalwood and then left...⁷⁸

Siale`ataongo's story refers to Sema village on the Efate mainland and suggests that the cave where the massacre occurred was located on Moso, once known as Deception Island. The villagers of Sema were closely related to the communities of western Moso.⁷⁹ Significantly, Siale`ataongo reveals that the details of the 1842 expedition were still recalled in Tonga more than 20 years later.

We should finally consider the only other eyewitness account of the events on Efate, before attempting to determine what Ma`afu's role actually was and how much responsibility he should bear for what occurred. George McLean made reference to further depredations that the other narratives omit. The dramatic nature of events is best conveyed in McLean's own words:

They killed the chief and his daughter on the beach and stript them of their ornaments, drove the natives aback into the interior and on top of the mountains, we held possession of the islands two months. I could hear the natives every night moaning over the dead bodies of their relations, our natives destroyed ship loads of yams that were strung up under their beautiful trees and killed hundreds of pigs took them on board and salted them down, the poor natives could see us plundering their property dare not come near us, they were afraid of firearms we took some of them prisoners two boys are at Tongatapu belonging to Sandwich Island.⁸⁰

McLean's account tends to confirm that of the two Efatese men. Later, missionary indignation over these events was both fervent and prolonged. In the aftermath of the expedition, Thomas on Tongatapu led the charge. Because of his personal acquaintance with most of the principals of the affair, he was best able to uncover the essentials of the truth. Also, he had ample time to speak to many of the Tongans who participated, some of whom he must have known since their childhood. Four days after two of the sandalwood vessels returned in October,

78 Alfred William Martin, *untitled reminiscences*, 206–208, PMB 1342.

79 I am grateful to Dr Chris Ballard for this information about Sema and Moso.

80 McLean to Murray.

Thomas interviewed their masters, as well as the two "doctors" on board. All parties readily acknowledged the "war", but their attribution of blame to the Tongan cutters served only to inflame Thomas' suspicions.⁸¹ He quickly learned the details of the events on Efate and noted that, according to several Tongan participants, the ships' captains and "doctors" all knew of and approved the slaughter in the caves. While the Tongans would have been under orders from Ma'afu, each side, Tongan and European, clearly sought to endow the other with as great a share of the blame as possible. For Thomas, since the cutters were supposed to have acted on their masters' orders, it was the masters who bore ultimate responsibility.⁸²

According to Thomas, trouble arose on Efate on one occasion because a young Tongan named Atete had been badly wounded with an axe. The missionary considered such an incident a paltry reason for all that followed. There is no question that his anger and compassion were genuine: "Oh how has my heart ached for the poor natives of Aromanga and Lavelave. Oh the awful wickedness of our natives".⁸³ But anger had turned to fury and compassion to righteous indignation when, the following month, he wrote a long letter to Captain Henry. The rage in Thomas' heart was evident from the letter's opening words, from Leviticus 19:17: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him". This emotional response to the sins committed on the sandalwood expedition led to a measured denunciation of Henry's role, beginning with his deception of Aleamotu'a "under the garb of friendship". Thomas informed Henry that those of his followers who were members of society had been expelled from it "for obeying your wicked orders". Thomas acknowledged that while some of the evil acts in the New Hebrides might have been committed without Henry's knowledge, "the war was begun and continued purely on your account ... I am compelled to lay the whole responsibility upon you".

In view of what Thomas would later write on the same subject, it is worth noting that he made mention to Henry of men, women and children "who had hid themselves in a large cave [and] were suffocated by the Tonga chief Methuselah [and his party]". Thomas could not restrain his grief and anger: "Oh cursed love of gold that has led to such deeds of darkness and cruelty upon the poor and unoffending inhabitants of the New Hebrides". He concluded his diatribe against Henry with a reference to the destruction of the New Hebrideans' dwellings and plantations and above all to the ruin of their "prospects" by the depredations of the Tongan cutters whose actions he considered to be the ultimate responsibility of the expedition's leader. Nor did he lose sight of the setback the events posed

81 Thomas, Journal, 31 Oct 1842.

82 *ibid.*, 3 Nov 1842.

83 *ibid.*

for the spiritual prospects of the people, whose experience at the hands of professing Christians were likely to alienate them from the faith, and from its messengers, for a very long time.⁸⁴ Despite the censure Thomas heaped on the expedition's leader, he did not forget the leadership role played by Methuselah Tae, who was later to accord that same role to Ma`afu.

In his 1845 letter to George Turner, Thomas acknowledged his sympathy for Aleamotu`a in 1842, partly because he saw the Tu`i Kānokupolu as the dupe of Henry. Thomas enclosed for his correspondent's benefit another copy of his 1842 letter to the captain. He referred in this copy to the suffocation in the cave being occasioned "by the Tonga chief M-----, whereas in the copy sent to his Society two years earlier, Thomas named Methuselah Tae as the person directly responsible for this particular atrocity. Although Thomas shrinks from writing Ma`afu's name in full, there can be little doubt that, during the two years since he wrote to Henry, he had come to see Ma`afu as the "Tonga chief" at whose door blame for the massacre in the cave could be laid.

George McLean, whose account of the expedition is the most detailed, concluded by stating that after the cutters had returned home, they refrained from speaking to their friends about events in the New Hebrides until the ships had sailed away again. "I am also well aware that they have not told Mr Thomas one half of their crimes and horrible transactions on those Islands where so much blood were [sic] spilt for a few tons of sandalwood".⁸⁵ Thomas did not need to know the full story in order to express his horror and to apportion blame. Although he censured Aleamotu`a, at least in his correspondence, for his failure to resist Henry's overtures, the missionary was unequivocal in blaming the captain. His colleague in the London Missionary Society, Aaron Buzacott of Rarotonga, shared Thomas' opinion. Writing in 1844, Buzacott referred to the *Star* massacre of 1842, when Samuel Henry's 20-year-old eldest son was among the crew of that ship massacred at the Isle of Pines near New Caledonia. "Surely there is a God that judgeth in the earth", Buzacott declared.⁸⁶ While Buzacott's views are likely to owe much to Thomas' reports of the expedition, he agrees with Thomas that Captain Henry bore ultimate liability for the New Hebridean atrocities. It was Henry, along with his fellow captains, who armed the cutters and allowed them to operate on shore without supervision. In blaming Henry, the missionaries are correct only to the extent that a captain is always responsible for the actions of his crew. In this case, Ma`afu acted independently, as Polynesian chiefs usually did. His cutters would have followed his orders with no thought of what the captains' views might be. Methuselah Tae's account suggests that when Ma`afu

84 Thomas to Samuel Pinder Henry, 17 Nov 1842, enclosed with Thomas to GS, WMMS, 8 Jun 1843.

85 McLean to Murray.

86 Aaron Buzacott to Arthur Tidman, 3 Jun 1844, LMS SSL.

wished to bring the murder and destruction to an end, Henry ordered the cutting to continue for several more days. Greed for profit seems to have been the principal motive of the expedition's leader.

In this context of ultimate responsibility, we must finally consider the role of Ma`afu and how much of the blame he shared. Although, in later years, he was sometimes accorded responsibility for the slaughter in the caves,⁸⁷ the extent of his culpability cannot be determined from the available evidence. Certainly Methuselah Tae, speaking before a critical audience, placed responsibility for the caves episode firmly on Ma`afu's shoulders, even though he considered that Ma`afu was afterwards "tired of this warfare" and had vainly urged Henry to depart. But it was Tae himself who apparently bore Thomas' condemnation for this incident, and Thomas was in a favourable position to know. The testimony of Methuselah Tae, and Ma`afu's later reticence when asked about the violence on Efate, suggests that he played a willing role in the slaughter in the caves, even if he cannot be shown to have been its instigator. In the light of his future career in Fiji, where he was sometimes known to use murderous violence for his own ends, and in consideration of the leadership role which this charismatic chief of exalted rank, though still young, could have easily assumed among his fellows, it is unlikely that he lacked initiative in the pursuit and destruction of the Efatese. Neither should we overlook the fact that for some 15 years Thomas and his colleagues had been instilling in their Tongan congregations contempt for heathenism in all its manifestations. It could be argued that Thomas himself was partly responsible for the attitudes towards non-Christian people that the young Tongan cutters carried with them to Efate. While Samuel Henry can be shown to be morally callous and needlessly cruel, Ma`afu was, at least in part, his willing henchman.⁸⁸

After Ma`afu returned from the sandalwood expedition in late October, he was not long in arousing missionary indignation once again. In January 1843, he committed "a very painful and immoral act" which came to light at one of the mission's regular "watchnights". Ma`afu's wife, "who is the Queen Charlotte's sister, having had to endure much neglect and indifference for a long time, has left him".⁸⁹ Several days later, the "foolish young man" was not disposed to accept advice on how to atone for his immorality, which was probably adultery.

87 Julian Thomas, in his *Cannibals and Convicts*, London 1886, stated that Ma`afu lit the fire at the cave's entrance (p. 67). Writing more than 40 years after the events, Thomas is likely to have been influenced by Erskine's published account.

88 For a fuller discussion of the 1842 sandalwood expedition, see John Spurway, "An indigenous perspective revisited: Ma`afu and the 1842 sandalwood expedition to the New Hebrides", *JPH*, Vol. 39, No. 2, Sep 2004, 231-239.

89 Thomas, *Journal*, 4 Jan 1843.

Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji

Thomas attributed part of the blame to Aleamotu`a “for sending [Ma`afu] on that expedition to the New Hebrides”. The same day, the missionary had a long interview with Elenoa:

I heard her statement respecting the way she has been treated by her husband for a long time ... Had ... her husband ... waited upon her and wished her to remain, ... she would have remained, but she said this was her second week of being separated from him, and no-one had been to ask her to remain, however she did not expect it of them, and she was tired of being cast off and taken no notice of by her husband.⁹⁰

During the next few days, Thomas could not persuade Aleamotu`a to attempt to influence Ma`afu. “The old man is but little concerned I fear about anything which will tend either to his own or anyone else’s real good”. The most he could be prevailed upon to do, according to Moala, was “to appeal to Ma`afu to build our canoe house, as a payment for his sin”.⁹¹ We do not know whether Ma`afu accomplished even this token act of atonement. In his late teens, he remained as he had long been: his own master.

During the two years following the New Hebrides expedition, only Ma`afu’s moral degradation was vouchsafed to posterity: we learn nothing of his growing political consciousness. Yet, as the son of Aleamotu`a, he must have been aware of the increasing encroachment of the outside world on Tonga and of the uncertainty, tending sometimes to fear, which arose in the islands when their vulnerability to the growing European presence in the Pacific was felt. The most significant manifestation of that uneasiness came in the form of a letter sent by Aleamotu`a to Queen Victoria, asking that Tonga be placed under British protection. Written by Tāufa`āhau at Aleamotu`a’s dictation, the letter was translated, with copies being made by missionary George Miller. One copy was despatched, through Walter Lawry, to the British government, while Thomas forwarded another to his Society in London.⁹² The letter emphasised that Tonga had hitherto been independent and free of interference from any

90 *ibid.*, 10 Jan 1843.

91 *ibid.*, 10 and 16 Jan 1843.

92 Josiah Tubou to Queen Victoria, 19 Feb 1844. A copy of the letter in the original Tongan appears in John and Sarah Thomas, *Correspondence 1835–1843*. For the English translation, see WMMS Tonga Correspondence 1835–1843; The Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society for the Year ending April 1845, 42; and John Thomas to Captain Tucker of HBM ship *Dublin* at Tahiti, 20 Apr 1846, FO58/26. Thomas sent the translation to Captain Tucker with the request that Tucker forward it to Queen Victoria “by the first opportunity”. Another translation was given to Rev. Walter Lawry, who passed it on to the Governor of New Zealand, Sir Robert Fitzroy. Fitzroy in turn forwarded it to the CO, whence it was sent to the FO. There, “it was conveniently forgotten, although a pencil note on it indicates it was ‘seen by Lord Aberdeen’” [Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs] (Fitzroy to Stanley, with enclosures, 16 Nov 1845, CO209/33 and Stephen to Addington, 21 July 1845, FO88/44, both quoted in Angus Ross, *New Zealand Aspirations in the Pacific in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford 1964, 28). Thomas enclosed a further copy with his letter to the GS, WMMS, 2 May 1844 (WMMS Tonga Correspondence). See also The Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society for the Year Ending April 1846, 44.

other power. Nor, said Aleamotu`a, would any such power be likely to interfere "with a people so few in number, so poor and so feeble". But now, having noted recent activities by the French in the Marquesas, and bearing in mind their augmented presence in Tahiti, Aleamotu`a feared they had similar designs on Tonga. He stressed his subjects' continued feelings of good will towards England and reminded Queen Victoria that it was from England that Tonga had received "Sacred Scriptures, that we might know the true God". The hand of the Wesleyan missionaries can readily be seen in this letter, even apart from its references to the benefits of Christianity. More fearful of Roman Catholic evangelisation in Tonga than of French political ambitions, and jealous of their positions of influence with Tonga's "kings", they saw British protection as the only effective means of assuring that the dominant position which they and the Wesleyan doctrine had achieved in Tonga would not come under threat.

The "good will" referred to by Aleamotu`a was apparently reciprocated. Eight months after his appeal to Queen Victoria, he received a letter from a British naval officer, Andrew Hamond, "Commander and Senior Officer at the Society Islands". The letter, written on board HM Steam Vessel *Salamanca* at Tahiti, praised Aleamotu`a for reports "from the masters of English vessels trading with the Friendly Islands that the Natives from all the groups under his wise benign rule, are invariably well disposed to all Foreigners, whom commerce or misfortune may ... bring them into contact with". Such flattery was not without purpose: Aleamotu`a was urged to assert whatever influence he could on the chiefs of Fiji to prevent the murders and other atrocities that continued to take place there. Hamond, who overestimated the extent of Aleamotu`a's influence in Fiji, was prompted to write by his belief that those who basked in the light of British "good will" were endowed with certain responsibilities to ensure they remained worthy of it.⁹³

Neither Aleamotu`a nor Tāufa`āhau was aware in February 1844 that the French had assumed control of both Tahiti and the Marquesas.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, French activities in both places reinforced in the minds of Tonga's rulers a sense of their islands' vulnerability. The insecurity of both Aleamotu`a and the missionaries was heightened by the presence of two French priests on Tongatapu. During the period when Tāufa`āhau and Aleamotu`a were discussing with Thomas the proposed letter to Queen Victoria, Aleamotu`a was informed that the priests intended visiting Tāufa`āhau. Acting with uncharacteristic alacrity, and for reasons not entirely clear, Aleamotu`a sent a message ahead of the priests, urging Tāufa`āhau to prepare kava for them. When the Frenchmen finally spoke to Tāufa`āhau, they urged him to embrace Roman Catholicism, describing "Mr Wesley" as "a poor man", and declared that all the remaining heathens in Tonga

93 Andrew S. Hamond to John Thomas, 4 Oct 1844, John and Sarah Thomas, Correspondence 1834–1850.

94 Thomas to GS, WMMS, 2 May 1844.

would soon be papists.⁹⁵ In the event, France was never to manifest an interest in acquiring Tonga, while the sought-after British protection would not eventuate for more than 50 years.

There is no telling whether these weighty matters occupied the attention of Ma`afu. Thanks to various visitors to Tonga in the middle of 1844, we have glimpses into the life of Aleamotu`a and his family, including Ma`afu. George Miller recorded in November 1843 that he had procured “the loan of a horse from the King’s son for ... six weeks on the promise of payment”.⁹⁶ This successful negotiation with a missionary strongly suggests that the son in question was Ma`afu, who was to get the better of many of Miller’s colleagues in Fiji in the future. More problematic is Miller’s reference several months later to Moala’s crisis of conscience, when she sent in her class paper because she had supplied her son, “who had gone to the Heathen”, with the means of becoming tattooed, and was sending him things from time to time.⁹⁷ Miller appreciated Moala’s delicacy, even if he, reflecting perhaps his own share of that quality, declined to name the erring son. He also knew whose good opinion it was desirable to retain: when he received a visit from Aleamotu`a two months later, he presented the aged “king” with a four-gallon iron pot, a very large knife, a gauge and four yards of broad calico.⁹⁸ As Ma`afu was to learn in Fiji, the rewards of Christianity were not always confined to the spiritual.

Two months later, Ma`afu made himself useful to the captain of a visiting British ship. HMS *North Star*, a Royal Navy hydrographic vessel commanded by Sir Everard Home, arrived at Tongatapu from Tahiti on 29 July. The ship’s log records: “Hove to and received a Pilot (a Native named Henry son of the King Josiah of Tongatabou)”. The *North Star* remained for over a week; on 6 August, after Aleamotu`a had visited the ship during the morning, the “Pilot (Prince Henry) came on board at 1:30. [We] weighed and made sail [At] 3:30 Lowered a boat and discharged pilot”.⁹⁹ In this terse report we find the last documented reference to Ma`afu before the event which was more significant, in political terms at least, than any other in his life hitherto: the death of his father Aleamotu`a in November 1845.

Aleamotu`a’s final illness became evident in August 1845, after his return to Nuku`alofa from a visit to the nearby island of `Eua. Suffering on his return from the early effects of dysentery, Aleamotu`a experienced a decline in health during the next three months. Finally, on Sunday 16 November, he was missing from his usual place in chapel. Thomas visited him in the evening and found

95 George Miller, *Tongan Diary*, 19 Feb 1844.

96 *ibid.*, 9 Nov 1843.

97 *ibid.*, 25 Mar 1844.

98 *ibid.*, 3 May 1844.

99 HMS *North Star*, *Ship’s Logs*, Series 1, 9 Sep 1841 – 10 Oct 1850.

him "in much pain", but "composed in his mind". Aleamotu`a died two days later, at about 10 p.m. on Tuesday 18 November, in the presence of Moala and all their children, including Ma`afu, his sister Baba, his brother Lasike and John and Sarah Thomas.¹⁰⁰ The only significant absentee was Tāufa`āhau, who was in Vava`u. Aleamotu`a was buried in a vault near Sia-ko-Veiongo, "according to his own expressed wish".¹⁰¹ The death of his father bequeathed to Ma`afu a future in which nothing could be certain. The indulgences of the past were at an end, while no-one, least of all Ma`afu himself, could determine what if any place he would have in the new structure of power.

In assessing Aleamotu`a's rule, we need only recall a very few of the comments made during his lifetime and that only to remind us of the indulgence which suffused Ma`afu's childhood and youth. Stephen Rabone, never Aleamotu`a's closest friend among the missionaries, opined several years before the chief's death that the people of Tongatapu "have no fear [of him] nor do they respect him".¹⁰² Commodore Wilkes' references to Aleamotu`a's desire for "peace and quietness" have already been noted.¹⁰³ Among more formal missionary criticisms were the charges that Aleamotu`a took no notice of crime on Tongatapu, encouraged rather than checked surviving heathenish customs, and was nothing less than "an enemy to civilisation".¹⁰⁴ Rabone, the most scathing of all, declared simply that nothing could be said of Aleamotu`a that was worth saying. "He lived an easy and comparatively a useless life", the missionary claimed.¹⁰⁵ Unjust as this last comment is, the fact remained that the uncertainties and dangers that marked much of Aleamotu`a's time as Tu`i Kānokupolu were only partly overcome when his successor sought to complete the unification of Tonga as a Christian kingdom.

When news reached Tāufa`āhau in Vava`u of Aleamotu`a's serious illness, he proceeded at once to Tongatapu.¹⁰⁶ There, "he was received with great respect by the chiefs and people of Nuku`alofa and after performing some little marks of respect he was appointed to succeed Josiah Tubou as Tu`i Kānokupolu".¹⁰⁷ Even though some heathen chiefs had not consented to the appointment, neither did they object, and the requisite ceremonies proceeded without hindrance. Succession of the *hau* in circumstances such as these was usual in

100 The account of Aleamotu`a's final illness and death is based on that in John Thomas to GS, WMMS, 16 Mar 1846, *WMN*, New Series, No. 94, Oct 1846, 153–156. See also Thomas, *Journal*, 1–18 Nov 1845; Miller, Nov 1845; WMMS *Annual Report*, 1847, 75.

101 Aleamotu`a's grave, restored in the 1990s, is located in the Mala`e `Aloa, the chiefly cemetery in Kolomotu`a, Nuku`alofa.

102 Rabone, *Journal*, 21 Jan 1840.

103 Wilkes, 28.

104 Friendly Islands District Meeting Minutes, 25 Jun 1842.

105 Rabone, *Journal*, 10 Dec 1845.

106 *ibid.*, 5 Nov – 13 Dec 1845; Turner, *Journal*, 26 Dec 1845.

107 Turner, *Journal*, 26 Dec 1845.

Tongan tradition. Only with the explicit consent of Tāufa`āhau could another relative of Aleamotu`a, such as his nephew Setaleki Mumui or his brother Lasike, have been appointed to succeed him. In the circumstances of 1845, such an appointment would have been most unlikely. More than 30 years later, it was stated in Tonga that Setaleki had waived his right to succeed in favour of Tāufa`āhau, a assertion unsupported by contemporary evidence.¹⁰⁸

A brief consideration of the circumstances of Tāufa`āhau's accession to power and of the lack of any real opposition to him should be made, especially in the light of the prospects of Ma`afu, son of the previous Tu`i Kānokupolu but still only about 20. On his deathbed, the Tu`i Kānokupolu had named "King George" as his successor. "I do not think there is any other person so suitable", Thomas believed. "My prayer to God is, that he [Tāufa`āhau] would undertake for us and give to God a righteous Governor".¹⁰⁹ Thomas need not have worried: Tāufa`āhau was *hau*, and his succession was certain. At a time when several leading Tongatapu chiefs were yet to embrace Christianity, Tāufa`āhau enjoyed missionary support as an unequivocal champion of the faith. While approval from the traditional Tongan polity was less explicit, it was to Tāufa`āhau and no other that most of the chiefs had looked to succeed as Tu`i Kānokupolu. Five years before, when Aleamotu`a had been dangerously ill with dysentery and thought unlikely to survive, urgent messages had been sent to Tāufa`āhau at his home in Ha`apai, urging him to hasten to Tongatapu. The Wesleyan missionary at Ha`apai, Peter Turner, realised that none but Tāufa`āhau could succeed: "he is the only next heir".¹¹⁰ Turner and his colleagues, notably Tucker and Rabone, recognised that when Aleamotu`a had sent urgently to Tāufa`āhau for help following the outbreak of civil war in January 1840, he was exercising "a right according to the usages of these islands to require his services".¹¹¹ Although Tāufa`āhau's warriors were correctly auxiliaries to those of Aleamotu`a, it was Tāufa`āhau who was appointed commander of the united forces. Such appointment was "by the wish of the Chiefs", and not only because Josiah's age disqualified him from such an office. The chiefs in question were influenced by Tāufa`āhau's *mana* as *hau*; their choice could have fallen on no one else.¹¹²

Although Tāufa`āhau's family connections were largely irrelevant to his right to succeed as Tu`i Kānokupolu, they should not be overlooked, even though they alone could not have ensured his elevation. He was neither brother nor son of Aleamotu`a, but Aleamotu`a had succeeded as Tu`i Kānokupolu under

108 Rev. Shirley W. Baker's reply to Consul Layard's despatch of 8 Mar 1876, 21 Oct 1876, Letter Book, Baker Papers.

109 Thomas, Journal, 2 Dec 1845.

110 Turner, Journal, 28 Nov 1840.

111 Friendly Islands District Meeting Minutes, Jun 1840.

112 David Cargill, *A Refutation of Chevalier Dillon's slanderous attacks on the Wesleyan Missionaries in the Friendly Islands...*, London 1842, 36.

extraordinary and unprecedented circumstances. Tāufa`āhau was the son of Tupouto`a, Aleamotu`a's predecessor as Tu`i Kānokupolu, and grandson of Tuku`aho, Aleamotu`a's older half-brother, who had also held the high office. What counted for him in 1845 was the fact that he had enjoyed supreme military power in Tonga throughout Aleamotu`a's ineffectual rule. Following his accession, he was able to combine his power with full titular authority. His perceived role as a champion of Christianity, a champion with both military muscle and traditional authority, created a potential for stability that had not existed in Tonga for more than 50 years.¹¹³

Tāufa`āhau's investiture ceremony, which the "heathen" chiefs present did nothing to oppose, took place at the village of Pangai in Hihifo. In his description of the ceremony, Thomas laid emphasis on the changed nature of the Tu`i Kānokupolu's august position. Not only was Tāufa`āhau "the legitimate heir to the government", he was also "the first Tui-Kanokubolu Preacher and Class Leader that ever existed".¹¹⁴ In some circumstances, Tāufa`āhau's role as the champion of Christianity would have alienated the heathen chiefs, in particular those of the Ha`a Havea. But the head of the Ha`a Havea was Ma`afu of Vaini, successor to Tāufa`āhau's grandfather, who had died in 1842. It was this "new" Ma`afu, as Thomas called him, along with the other most important chiefs of his *ha`a*, Lavaka of Pea and Vaea of Houma, who elected Tāufa`āhau as Tu`i Kānokupolu.¹¹⁵ Tāufa`āhau's claims could not be gainsaid; he was *hau*, and no other chief could dispute his succession unless able to mount a challenge.

Nowhere among reports of the death of Aleamotu`a and succession of Tāufa`āhau is there any mention of Ma`afu.¹¹⁶ We are not even certain whether he witnessed the investiture ceremony, although there are indications that he did not. Only one person was then named as a possible rival to Tāufa`āhau: Mumui, often called by his Christian name of Shadrach, or Setaleki, the son of Aleamotu`a's half-brother Tupoumālohi, the fourteenth Tu`i Kānokupolu. Tāufa`āhau is supposed to have expressed a wish that preference be given to Mumui.¹¹⁷ Bearing in mind the missionaries' unqualified support for Tāufa`āhau, such a request is not likely to have been taken seriously. As *hau*, Tāufa`āhau could have chosen the new Tu`i Kānokupolu, if he genuinely did not wish to accept office himself. Mumui outranked him, as did Lasike, who was apparently not considered by anyone. Mumui however had in the past been mentioned as a possible future Tu`i Kānokupolu.

113 For a discussion of the nexus between rank and power in Tonga, see Elizabeth Bott, "Power and Rank in the Kingdom of Tonga", *JPS*, Vol. 90, No. 1, March 1981, 7–81.

114 Thomas to GS, WMMS, 17 Mar 1846, WMMS Tonga Correspondence and *WMN*, New Series, No. 94, Oct 1846, 156–157.

115 Thomas, Journal, 10 and 25 May 1842.

116 See, for example, Thomas, Journal, 2 Dec 1845.

117 Thomas West, *Ten Years in South-Central Polynesia*, London 1865, 58.

Mumui was “the missionaries’ principal school teacher” in 1840, with sole charge of the large mission school at Nuku`alofa. Jane Tucker had informed Commodore Wilkes that Mumui was deemed a son of Josiah and would be considered, along with Tāufa`āhau, as a possible successor.¹¹⁸ Proficient in English, Mumui was later described as “tall and handsome, but delicate-looking”, with “a mild and unambitious disposition”.¹¹⁹ Despite his high rank through his mother and his identification through the missionary cause, Mumui was not in 1845 a candidate for the office of Tu`i Kānokupolu, whatever some earlier expectations among resident Europeans might have been. Tāufa`āhau had long been paramount chief of Tonga and was seen by the Wesleyan missionaries as a crusader for their cause, a man who would fuse the new religion firmly with the traditional structure of rank and power in Tonga.

There is no contemporary evidence that Ma`afu might have succeeded his father.¹²⁰ He was too young and inexperienced and did not enjoy the missionaries’ confidence. He lacked any serious credentials, among them high rank, for the task, and was not even considered. Forty years after Aleamotu`a’s death, the British Consul to Tonga, James Blyth, recorded an oral tradition that the dying Tu`i Kānokupolu said to his son Ma`afu, “Do not be persuaded by the people to be my successor: I wish Tubou to succeed me. Wait for him”.¹²¹ We also have some interesting, if very flimsy, evidence that Ma`afu might have been asked to intrigue against Tāufa`āhau. On 5 December, Thomas, who never bore any love for Ma`afu, recorded: “Ma`afu the King’s son has rather disgraced himself ... his conduct was nearly the only thing I have heard of which gave pain”.¹²² It took little to earn Thomas’ ire, but what had Ma`afu done? Peter Turner in Ha`apai referred to what might be the same matter three weeks later, but is less severe on Ma`afu:

From letters received since we learn that the Tuitonga has been trying to get the son of the late Tubou to aid in beating off George by some secret operations. The late Tubou’s son would not unite in so base a deed and thus the vile purposes of God’s enemies have been brought to light and will no doubt be frustrated. There may be some exaggeration in this account but the above is as I have been informed.¹²³

118 Wilkes, 17–18.

119 Erskine, 128, 141. See also Sir Oswald Walters Brierly, *Journal on HMS Rattlesnake and HMS Miranda* 1850–51, 20 Jun 1850.

120 Some writers have suggested Ma`afu as a possible successor. See, for example, Basil Thomson, *The Diversions of a Prime Minister*, Edinburgh and London 1894, 356; R.A. Derrick, “Ma`afu”, *Transactions of the Fiji Society for Science and Industry*, Vol. 2, Dec 1953, 107–116.

121 James Blyth, *Issue of King George (Tubou) of Tonga*, 9th June 1885, MS, WPHC 21/20.

122 Thomas, *Journal*, 5 Dec 1845.

123 Turner, *Journal*, 26 Dec 1845.

To what letters was Turner referring? And what if anything had "Tubou's son" been asked to do? Aleamotu`a was survived by at least three sons, so it is not certain that Turner was referring to Ma`afu. The only way any of them could have effectively challenged the *hau* would have been in alliance with the Tu`i Tonga and any forces at the latter's disposal. While it is just conceivable that Ma`afu was keeping his options open concerning a future challenge, he had to accept that Tāufa`āhau, unlike Aleamotu`a and many of his other predecessors as Tu`i Kānokupolu, united that office with the substance of power. Ma`afu himself was left firmly in the political wilderness.

This text taken from *Ma`afu, prince of Tonga, chief of Fiji: The life and times of Fiji's first Tui Lau*, by John Spurway, published 2015 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.