

CHRISTIANITY AND TAUFĀ‘ĀHAU IN TONGA: 1800-1850

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INTRODUCTION

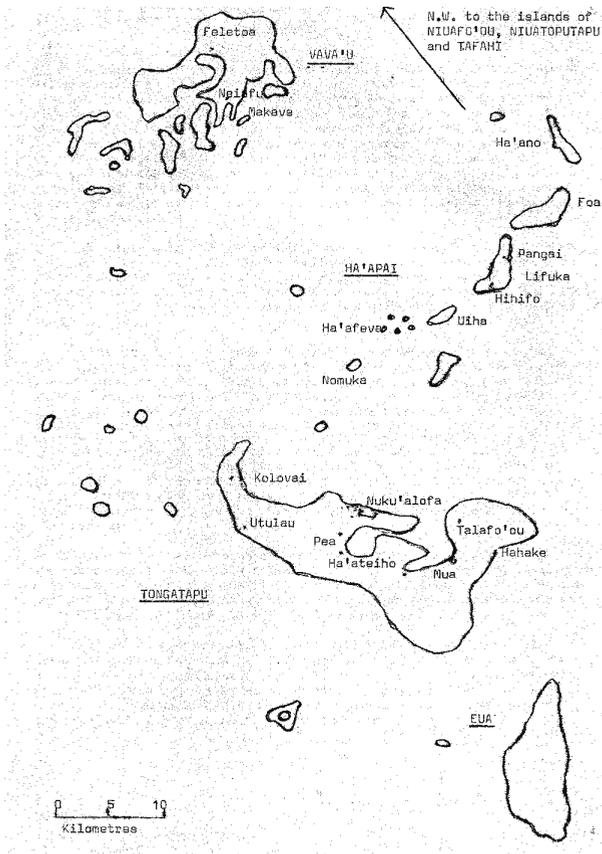
Near the centre of the Pacific Ocean lies the only island kingdom in the region, and the smallest in the world, Tonga. It is a group of small islands, numbering about 150, with only 36 of them inhabited, and which are scattered between 15° and 23° south latitude, and between 173° and 177° west longitude. The kingdom is divided into three main island groups: Tongatapu, situated to the south, Ha‘apai, an extensive archipelago of small islands in the centre, and Vava‘u, in the north.

Tonga lies 1,100 miles northeast of New Zealand, and 420 miles southeast of Fiji. With a total area of 269 square miles, the population is more than 100,000, most of whom are native Polynesians. Tonga is an agricultural country, and most of the inhabited islands are fertile. The climate, however, is semi-tropical, with heavy rainfall and high humidity.

Tonga, along with the rest of the Pacific, was completely unknown to Europe until the exploration of the area by the Spaniards and Portuguese during the 16th century. These explorers were seeking land to establish colonies, and to convert the inhabitants to Christianity. By the second decade of the 17th century, more explorers from other parts of Europe came into the area, to discover an unknown southern continent called “Terra Australis Incognita”, between South America and Africa. Among these, the Dutch were the first Europeans to discover Tonga. The Dutch were not interested in winning souls, but they were searching for new trade routes and markets. Jacob Le Maire and William Schouten were the first Dutchmen to sail across the Pacific in 1615. After discovering small islands in the area, they found two islands of Tonga: Tafahi and Niua

Fo'ou. At Tafahi, the Tongans tried to steal one of the ship's boats, and one man was wounded by a gunshot. After a few days, Niua Fo'ou was sighted, and named "Good Hope", because the Dutch expected to get water there. Unfortunately, two natives were shot dead after an attempt to capture one of the ship's boats that had been sent ashore for water. Abel Tasman, another Dutch sea captain, was sent to the Pacific to follow up on Le Maire's and Schouten's island discoveries. He landed on Tongatapu, 'Eua, and Nomuka, in the southern part of the Ha'apai group in 1643.

Sketch map of the Kingdom of Tonga



While all these voyages were truly remarkable, much more important was the visit of the famous English explorer, Captain James Cook, which led to the opening up of a vast area of the Pacific to European colonisation and settlement, particularly British civilisation and evangelisation. Cook visited Tonga three times in 1773, 1774, and 1777. Like other explorers, Cook went back with reports of his discoveries among the Pacific islands to England. His description of the “arbitrary powers of the chiefs and priests over their subjects, the cruel and inhumane oppression, superstitious beliefs, human sacrifices, widow strangling, and infanticide” stirred up the evangelicals in England to evangelise the islanders.

The London Missionary Society, founded in 1795, sent its first missionaries to the Pacific to begin work in Tahiti and Tonga. Both countries were thought to have a good climate, and food for the missionaries, and that their languages would be easily learned. The LMS ship *Duff* first arrived in Tahiti in 1797, and then went to Tonga, with ten missionaries, to start the work of the mission. They were not well prepared for the task. Most of them were artisans, and the Tongans were only interested in their material goods, and were not willing to replace their traditional beliefs with those of Christianity. During the civil war, in 1799 and 1800, three of the missionaries were killed at the village of Ha‘ateiho, and the rest fled to New South Wales.

The Wesleyan Methodist Mission first attempted to convert Tonga in 1822, when its pioneer, Walter Lawry, arrived. But he met with similar problems to those encountered by the earlier mission. With the failure of his wife’s health, Lawry abandoned the mission, after 14 months in Tonga. It was not until 1826 that the second Wesleyan Methodist Mission party arrived in Tonga to establish their mission in Hihifo (the western part of Tongatapu). From this time, the work of the mission began to grow, in spite of strong resistance from the Tongans.

THE RISE OF A CHIEF: 1799-1826

TAUFA‘ĀHAU IN HIS EARLY YEARS

It is said that no other ruler in the Pacific has done more for his people, and his country, than Tafua‘āhau (King George). Historians call him “The

Maker of Modern Tonga”.¹ Tongans were ruled by three different dynasties. Each dynasty had its own chiefs, and each chief was the head of a socio-political unit. Taufa‘āhau changed this traditional socio-political system by uniting Tonga into one kingdom, under the rule of a constitution. He kept Tonga unique, in its position as the only island country in the Pacific that has never been colonised. He was also responsible for the successful transition of Tonga society from being uncivilised to a modern one, through adopting Western ideas, and accepting Christianity.

Taufa‘āhau was born in 1797, the year the first missionaries of the London Missionary Society arrived in Tonga. Two conflicting stories surround his birthplace, according to oral traditions, but the belief of the Ha‘apai people seems most likely true.² It is believed that Taufa‘āhau was born at a spot called Niu‘ui on the island of Lifuka, Ha‘apai. After he was born, the people of Lifuka made for him a *namoa* (baby food) from a *Nginingini* (coconut shrivelled inside) that was brought from the island of Ofolanga. He was then given his first name, Nginingini of Ofolanga (Nginingini of Ofolanga). At Lifuka, there was a place called ‘Ahau, where a local god named Taufa‘itahi (Taufa of the sea) lived. In childhood, Taufa‘āhau was believed to have been sick, and was taken to this god for healing. After recovery, the *taula* (traditional priest) told his people to name him Taufa‘āhau, because the god Taufa‘itahi of ‘Ahau had healed him.

For many generations, Tonga had maintained a unique social structure, in terms of government and leadership. Originally, the whole of Tonga was under the rule of the Tu‘i Tonga dynasty. The first Tu‘i Tonga was Aho‘eitu, son of a god named Tangaloa, who was believed to have come down to earth, and to have married a Tongan woman named Va‘epopua.³ The Tu‘i Tonga was both the temporal and spiritual ruler of Tonga for many years, until the 23rd Tu‘i Tonga, Takalaua, who was murdered. The next Tu‘i Tonga, Kau‘ulufonua Fekai, did not want to be a temporal ruler

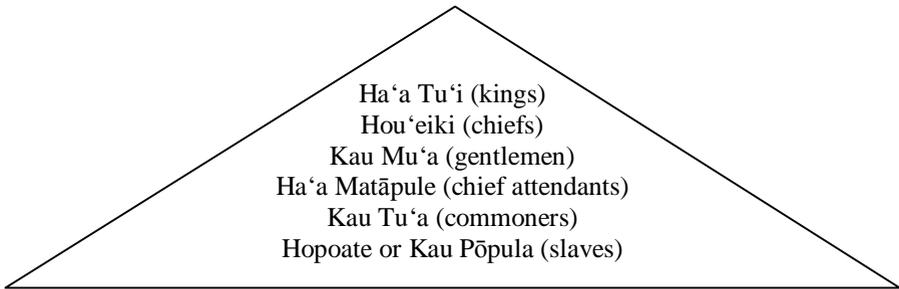
¹ J. S. Neill, *Ten Years in Tonga* (1955), p. 10.

² Sione Lātūkefu, in his *Church and State in Tonga*, explains clearly the two stories in the footnote on page 87. In the chapter, he holds the view that Ha‘apai was his birthplace.

³ A. H. Wood, *History and Geography of Tonga* (1932), p. 5.

himself, and created the new office of *Hau* (temporal ruler), to look after the secular responsibilities of the people, while he himself became '*Eiki Toputapu* (sacred ruler). The new position of *Hau* was then given to Kau'ulufonua Fekai's brother, Mo'ungamotu'a, who made it a new dynasty under the title, Tu'i Ha'atalaia. Like the Tu'i Tonga, Mo'ungatonga, the sixth Tu'i Ha'atalaia, created the third dynasty to take over the administrative duties and daily affairs of the people.

The Tu'i Tonga stood at the top of the social pyramid, and the various other classes of Tongan society were underneath:



The Ha'a Tu'i were the upper class, and consisted of the three dynasties, and their families. The Hou'eiki were chiefs of various ranks. Each chief had to give allegiance to the Tu'i Tonga, and owned his own district and people. The chiefs also had absolute power over the lives and property of their own people. Below the chiefs, were the Kau Mu'a or gentlemen. They were the sons of a union between a chief and Matāpule. They had no special responsibility to perform. The next class was the Ha'a Matāpule, or chief attendants. They were the people who carried out the orders of the chiefs, or acted as spokesmen for the chiefs. Sometimes they took on the chief's role, when he was absent. Further down the scale were the Kau Tu'a, or commoners. Their duty was to provide for the personal needs of the chiefs, and prepare feasts and presentations for public and traditional ceremonies. The lowest class were the Kau Pōpula, or slaves, who had no freedom to exercise their rights in the society.

Taufa'āhau was born into an upper-class family. His father, Tupouto'a, was a Tu'i Kanokupolu. His mother, Houmofaleono, was a daughter of a

chief named Ma'afu, known as the head of Ha'a Havea (Ha'a is a clan of people, the largest socio-political unit in Tonga, headed by a principal chief). Tongans still recall the story of her pregnancy, because this time she "developed a craving for human blood". Ma'afu was so worried by this development that he gave instructions to his people to kill the infant when it was born, especially if it was a boy. Tupouto'a heard of Ma'afu's instruction, and took his wife Houmofaleono from Tongatapu to Ha'apai, where their baby was born.

As he grew up, people greatly admired him for his physical build and appearance, particularly the Europeans who visited Tonga. Commodore Charles Wilkes, a leader of the United States Exploring Expedition to Taufa'āhau in 1840, said of him:

When he made his appearance, I could not but admire him. He is upwards of six feet in height, extremely well proportioned and athletic, his limbs are rounded and full, his features regular and manly, with a fine open countenance and sensible face.⁴

Not only were his physical features admired, but people witnessed his outstanding strength and courage, both on land and at sea. Among these was Basil Thomson, a young civil servant from Fiji, who worked in Tonga for 10 months. He said of Taufa'āhau:

His great natural powers were enhanced by the most careful athletic training. As he surpassed his fellows in stature and length of limb, so was he their superior in all sports that demanded skill. None was so fleet of foot, none could meet him in a wrestling or boxing match, none could endure against him in swimming in the surf, nor handle a *Tafa'anga* (fishing canoe) laden with fish in a sea way, as he, none was his match in a fight to the death.⁵

⁴ C. Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition during the years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842* (1845), p. 180.

⁵ B. Thomson, *The Diversions of a Prime Minister* (1894), p. 342.

TAUFA'ĀHAU AND HIS STRUGGLE FOR LEADERSHIP

Towards the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, Tonga was facing the horrors of civil war and tribal conflicts. This was the outcome of the assassination of Tauga'āhau's grandfather, Tuku'aho, in 1799. Tuku'aho had attempted to establish the authority of the Tu'i Kanokupolu over the other dynasties and the chiefs of Tonga. On some occasions, the Tu'i Kanokupolu dynasty emerged as the ruling dynasty. After Tuku'aho's death, his son Tupouto'a continued the struggle for power for eight years until he died in 1820. He, too, failed to accomplish his father's ambition. The Tu'i Kanokupolu, therefore, was left vacant from 1820 to 1826. Tauga'āhau was about 23 years old at that time. No effort was made to appoint him as Tu'i Kanokupolu because of the fear that it would be very dangerous for him to attempt to put down the rebellious chiefs of Tongatapu, who were against the Tu'i Kanokupolu.⁶

Despite the failure of his forefathers, Tauga'āhau was ambitious to "unify Tonga under the supreme authority of the Tu'i Kanokupolu".⁷ However, he knew how to reign in his ambition until the right time came. He became ruler of Ha'apai under a title *Tu'i Ha'apai* (King of Ha'apai) in 1820. Later, he decided to put an end to the Tu'i Tonga family, which appointed its members as ruling chiefs in various parts of Tonga. When they heard that Tauga'āhau had become ruler of the Ha'apai, they resented it and indicated that they wanted the sacred power of the Tu'i Tonga to be re-established. The two dynasties had a close link through customary marriage. Tu'i Kanokupolu provided the *Mohefo* or principal wife for the Tu'i Tonga. The position of Mohefo was particularly important as her son by the Tu'i Tonga inherited the title of Tu'i Tonga. After the Tu'i Kanokupolu had presented his daughter as Mohefo, he looked upon the Tu'i Tonga as his *foha tapu*, or sacred son.

Using tricks and cunning was necessary when Tauga'āhau wanted to achieve his ambitions. He persuaded the elders of his family not to give his sister as Mohefo to Laufilitonga, the heir to the Tu'i Tonga, but to

⁶ Wood, *History and Geography of Tonga* (1932), p. 42.

⁷ S. Lātūkefu, "King George Tupou I of Tonga", in *Pacific Islands Portraits* (1973), J. W. Davidson, and Deryck Scarr, eds, p. 58.

send her to another chief instead. The leading chief of the Tu'i Tonga in Ha'apai at this time, Tokemoana, heard about Taufa'āhau's plan and decided to put a stop to it. He invited Laufilitonga to Ha'apai to fight against Taufa'āhau.

Laufilitonga went to Ha'apai in 1824, and soon afterwards, fighting broke out between these two heirs to the two royal dynasties. This fight decided their political future. Ha'apai was divided between them, but Laufilitonga received more support from the chiefs and their people, and was better equipped with the guns and powder they got from the Europeans. The two opponents built their *kolotau* (fortresses) for their supporters. Laufilitonga had one at Hihifo called Velata and Taufa'āhau had one at Pangai.

In the first war that followed, Taufa'āhau and his followers were defeated. Taufa'āhau was very keen to defeat Laufilitonga for he knew that Laufilitonga was a stumbling block to his attempt to rule Tonga. In spite of this defeat, he went to Tongatapu to seek advice from his grandfather's brother, Aleamotu'a, and his uncle Ulakai about how to put down the heir to the Tu'i Tonga. While in Tongatapu, his relative from the island of 'Eua gave Taufa'āhau guns, and his son Puakatau to assist and give instructions about how to use the guns. On his return to Ha'apai, Taufa'āhau recruited more warriors from the southern islands of the group, particularly from Nomuka, Ha'afeva and 'Uiha. Consequently, Taufa'āhau was successful in the final battle known as "The Battle of Velata", which took place in 1826. It was not until after these wars that Taufa'āhau made any attempt to secure the position of the Tu'i Kanokupolu, particularly his supreme authority over the Ha'apai group.

Laufilitonga's life was spared and he was told not to cause any more trouble as long as he lived. He returned to Tongatapu and took the position of Tu'i Tonga until his death in 1865, which marked the end of the Tu'i Tonga line, and their rival to the throne of Tonga.

TAUFA'ĀHAU AND TRADITIONAL RELIGION

Before the coming of the Wesleyan Mission, in the early 1820s, the traditional religion was bound up with the politics of Tonga and occupied a

central place in the Tonga worldview. Taufa'āhau was still heathen, as were all his people. Each chief and his people had their own gods, and the chief was believed to have *mana* or supernatural power given by the gods according to their own good will. Failure to perform religious duties and to honour the gods would cause war, famine, epidemics, diseases, and death. Offerings were made on important occasions, and the gods were consulted, particularly in the case of war, or before going on a long voyage.⁸ Taufa'āhau had two gods, who lived in the sea, named Haehaetahi and Taufa'itahi.⁹

Describing the religion of the Tongans in general, Thomas West, who wrote an account of his ten years of missionary work in Tonga, says:

1. The religion of the Tonganese (Tongans), as it existed when they became known to the civilised world, incorporated no abstract principles of belief. It was rather a system of despotism, in which deities, ceremonies, and restrictions had been indefinitely multiplied, till it presented a chaos of dark superstitions, into which the population plunged headlong, through slavish fear and ignorance.
2. No spirit of benevolence pervaded the system. It was bound up in punishments for the present life, and in dark threatenings for the future.
3. Savage rites and deities, who delighted in mischief and blood; a cruel and rapacious priesthood; a despotic and oppressive government; inhuman faiths and absurd superstitions; under these the people were held in abject bondage.¹⁰

Traditionally, it was believed that only the *Laumālie*, or the souls of the chiefs, went to Pulotu after death. Pulotu was a far-away island paradise, to the west of Tongatapu, where nothing mortal could survive. At this paradise, the souls of the chiefs became secondary gods, and returned to earth in the form of living creatures, such as lizards, sea snakes, sharks, or

⁸ Lātūkefu, *Church and State in Tonga* (1974), p. 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹⁰ T. West, *Ten Years in South Central Polynesia* (1865), pp. 255-256.

octopuses, and were sometimes embodied in a carved piece of wood. The commoners had no place in the traditional religion. They were often called *kainangaefonua* (eaters of the soil) because it was believed that they turned into vermin after they died. This word is still used today by commoners. These secondary gods or spirits of the dead chiefs controlled the daily affairs of the people, and were mainly responsible for daily happenings.

Apart from the gods of Puluotu, the Tongans believed in a hierarchy of gods, known as principal gods. They lived far from the people and had little to do with their daily affairs, because they were confined to their own localities. Among these gods were the *kau* Tangaloa,¹¹ who lived in the sky, the *kau* Maui, who lived in the underworld, and Hikule‘o, who lived in Puluotu.¹² Tangaloa gods were creator gods who created some of the islands in Tonga. The Maui gods were gods of fishing who pulled up most of the islands in Tonga with a fishing hook. Hikule‘o was the god of weather and fertility.

Human mediators, priests or priestesses, served as the mouthpieces of the gods.¹³ The worship of the gods was offered in the temples or god-houses, where the human mediators attended and cared for the sacred objects of the gods. In his notes on Tongan religion, Collocott wrote about what he had seen in the temples during his 13 years of missionary work in Tonga.

In the temples were kept sacred objects, such as war weapons, stones, pieces of wood, more or less roughly carved and often painted with yellow turmeric. Several fine mats were indispensable, carefully preserved to be spread for the reception of the visiting god, in the same way as a household brings out its good mats for a distinguished mortal visitor. At times of worship, these mats were spread and the priest sat on or beside them, while the sacred objects of the temple were displayed on the mats.¹⁴

¹¹ *Kau* is a plural sign. It comes before nouns denoting persons.

¹² S. S. Farmer, *Tonga and the Friendly Islands* (1855), p. 13. E. E. V. Collocott, "Notes on Tongan Religion", in *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol 30, p. 152-153.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

God-houses were built near the dwelling of the chief, or among a grove of trees outside the villages.¹⁵

When a chief died, some religious ceremonies were performed. Friends and relatives gathered together to participate in the ceremony. Men usually cut and bruised their bodies with clubs and spears to show their sympathy; women cut their hair and beat their cheeks until they were covered with blood. When a funeral of a high chief took place, there was an offering of human sacrifice, and cutting off of fingers. Taufa'āhau lost his two small fingers during one of these ceremonies.¹⁶

Prior to the coming of the Wesleyan missionaries in 1822 and 1826, it was evident that the traditional religion had already become weak, and had lost its domination over the lives of the people, especially among some of the most powerful chiefs. The main reason for this lay in the civil war, when god-houses and sanctuaries were destroyed, and burnt down. In some cases, the gods failed to help in wars, and this caused the chiefs to doubt their gods. For example, Taufa'āhau showed his disregard for the traditional religion, when his family gods failed to help his father in his struggle for power. Even during the battle of Velata, he was speared in the back by a chief named Faka'iloatonga. Taufa'āhau viewed this as a failure of the gods to protect him.¹⁷

THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY: 1826-1829

The first efforts of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission in Tonga, which began in 1822, were abandoned after 14 months. In 1826, the second Mission party, led by John Thomas from the Wesleyan Methodist church in London, came to re-establish the mission and its work. This year is well known in Tonga as the year of “the coming of Christianity to Tonga”. Although, in the early years, the missionaries encountered problems, “a gracious work began”, which resulted in Taufa'āhau's embracing

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church*, vol I, Tonga and Samoa (1975), p. 4.

¹⁷ Lātūkefu, “King George Tupou I of Tonga”, p. 58.

Christianity. More important was the “bringing of the whole population under the influence of Christianity”.¹⁸

JOHN THOMAS WITH ATA AT HIHIFO

Tongans regard John Thomas as the “Founding Father” of the Wesleyan Methodist church in Tonga. The Tongans believe that he was the missionary who brought Christianity to the country. He was born in England in 1796, in the village of Olent, near Stourbridge, Staffordshire. He had little formal education. He only went to day school in his primary years, and to Sunday School. At the age of 11, his father took him into the family business to learn the trade of blacksmith. Later, John Thomas became a local preacher in his village. During the Wesleyan revival, he became interested in missionary work, and was accepted as a missionary by the British Methodist Conference in 1824.

Thomas’s colleague, John Hutchinson, was appointed to work in Tonga by the Australian Methodist Conference. Hutchinson waited for Thomas, when he called in at Sydney. Hutchinson had been a local preacher in Tasmania, and was ordained in Sydney on April 25, 1826. It is said that this was the “first ordination in Australia”.¹⁹

The two missionaries, and their wives, arrived at Mario Bay, Hihifo, the eastern part of the main island of Tongatapu, on June 28, 1826, and stayed on board the ship for several days. The party was informed, before they went ashore, by one of those who had stayed behind from the first Mission party, that the former station that had been abandoned at Mu‘a, on the western part of the island, had since been taken over by the chief of that area. Any attempt to re-establish the mission would have to be made in some other area, because of the previous strong opposition from the traditional priests and the people. The constant threats to kill the missionary might happen again at Mu‘a, if they returned there. Therefore,

¹⁸ R. Young, *Journal of a Deputation from the Wesleyan Conference to Australia and Polynesia* (1855), p. 211.

¹⁹ Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist church*, vol I, Tonga and Samoa, p. 33.

the missionaries had to find out God's will, and finally decided to stay at Hihifo. Thomas wrote:

The will of the Lord be done. Thus we were brought to Hihifo, which was, perhaps, the very best part of the Friendly Islands we could at that time have been brought to.²⁰

The missionaries went ashore on July 5. The paramount chief of Hihifo, known as Ata, met the party. At this meeting Thomas recorded:

The chief appeared much pleased to see us, and took hold of first one of our hands, and then of the other, accompanying us to the house where the meeting was to be held.²¹

A traditional feast was then provided for the party, and, after eating, Thomas told Ata, through his interpreter, Charles Tindall, about the purpose of their coming.

We then gave them to understand why we came to their island, not because their land was better than ours, neither did we come to join them in their wars, but we came to teach them to know and to fear the Lord, and many other good things.²²

Ata gave Thomas and his party a piece of land to build a house, and to use for gardening and a school. He promised to allow the missionaries to worship their God in their own premises without interruption. He also said he would protect them from other chiefs, in the case of war. Ata was regarded as the most powerful chief in Tongatapu.²³

From the beginning, Thomas made it clear to Ata that he wanted to teach the people, especially the children. On July 9, their first Sunday at Hihifo, the missionaries had two services in the native house they first occupied.

²⁰ *Wesleyan Juvenile Offering*, vol X (1854), p. 20.

²¹ Thomas' journal, June 14, 1826, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, vol V (1828), p. 212.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Thomas' journal, June 27, 1826.

Thomas preached his first sermon in Tonga from Ps 84:11. Following that, they had family worship every day, both morning and evening. There were also prayer meetings on Wednesday evenings, and class meetings on Friday evenings. Few Tongans attended these meetings very often, which were all in English. Charles Tindall used to explain afterwards what had been said.

In spite of the missionaries' slow progress with the language, some people came seeking instruction, and Thomas found a little time to begin teaching. Unfortunately, the missionaries, at this stage, were preoccupied with other affairs, like erecting the "double-storeyed prefabricated house and store" that they had brought with them from Sydney.²⁴ One of Ata's sons, Lolohea, was particularly keen to learn to read and write. Thomas noted at the time: "Lolohea waited all afternoon in the yard, expecting me to teach him again, but I had too many other things to do."²⁵ Another youth later asked for Thomas' help with reading and writing, asking in the little English he knew: "Me like book, you teach me book." Again, Thomas had to say in his journal, "But I had not time to teach him."²⁶

Four months after their arrival, the missionaries were ready to start a school. The pupils were mostly children, but there were some youths and adults.²⁷ For the first few weeks, the students were very keen, but not for long: they became "very trying . . . rude and hardened".²⁸ This was because the chief (Ata) did not want the *tu'a* (commoner) children to be taught. At this stage, Ata did not keep his promises. After learning the new ways and teachings of Christianity, the chief and the people decided to "preserve the status quo". They felt that the old standards and values of their customs and traditions were still more meaningful and relevant to their needs. They saw this in the missionaries' "dos and don'ts". Strong prohibitions were given against smoking, dancing, games, and other customs such as *tukuafo* (gifts of Koloa, and articles of food and drink,

²⁴ Ibid., July 15, 1826, July 23, 1826, August 5, 1826.

²⁵ Thomas' journal, July 15, 1826.

²⁶ Ibid., July 23, 1826.

²⁷ Ibid., November 21, 1826.

²⁸ Ibid.

presented at the funeral of a chief) which was mistakenly viewed as an offering to the dead.

It was also obvious that the presence of the missionaries, and the new religion, threatened the traditional position and prestige of the chiefs and raised the commoners' social, religious, and political status. The missionaries' teachings introduced a new standard of values, which made no distinctions among people. All men were equal in the sight of God, and everyone was a sinner, and had to be forgiven and to submit to certain moral disciplines in order to go to heaven, a place for everyone after death. The problem was further increased by the missionaries' view of their own power and authority. They thought of themselves as the head of the mission station and all their converts: chiefs and people were under their authority and had to obey them. Ata once complained that Thomas had been trying to be chief over his (Ata's) own people and Thomas told the people that he was not afraid of him.²⁹

Thomas also realised the reason why the chiefs were initially eager to have a missionary reside among them. As was the case throughout the Pacific, the islanders coveted the European goods of the missionaries. In a letter, Thomas described the reason why the chiefs, including Ata, were so friendly to the missionaries.

Most of the chiefs upon this island will say how glad they would be to have missionaries, but the truth is they only want our property and money. Most of them cannot protect us from other chiefs, neither do they wish to change their religion, but whatever chief first receives a missionary or an Englishman, all the property he has is considered as belonging to that chief.³⁰

Ata was a most jealous worshipper of the gods of his forefathers. He was a father, as well as the chief of his people, and so he was very careful that his children and people should honour their gods on all occasions. He eventually decided to withdraw his support, and put down the new

²⁹ Ibid., October 18, 1828.

³⁰ Ibid., April 11, 1827, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, vol V (1827), p. 516.

religion, by refusing to accept it personally, and forbidding his people from joining the mission. Thomas continued in his letter:

The chief we live under has violated the engagements made to us at our first landing, and is averse to our teaching the children, and through his disapprobation, but few dare come. He has refused us land to build a chapel and school upon. As to natives attending our worship, it is on pain of death for them to come. The chief has watched himself, and set men to watch at our gates, on the Lord's day, to prevent his people coming in, and even the poor children that have been coming to the worship of God, have been run after and driven away.³¹

In spite of the strong opposition from the chief and most of the people, Thomas said that "the truth of God triumphed at Hihifo". Some people still attended services regularly. Those who were prevented from openly professing their faith were worshipping God privately in small villages, a few miles from where the chief lived.³²

Thomas and Hutchinson eventually decided to abandon the work in Tonga, after being frustrated by their "failure to win" Ata and the people of Hihifo to Christianity, the "growing hostility of the people", the "failure of Hutchinson's health", and a small "quarrelling" between the two missionaries.³³ In July, 1827, a new assistant for the missionaries at Hihifo, William Weiss, arrived unexpectedly with his wife and family. Thomas and Hutchinson had been packing their possessions secretly, and were waiting for a ship to go back to Sydney. The boat that brought Weiss was not big enough for the missionaries and their families. Thomas sent Weiss and their luggage back in the same boat, with a letter to the "brethren in Sydney" to send a larger ship to bring all of the mission party home. The brethren in Sydney rejected this request from Thomas, and decided to send another mission party instead, to save the work in Tonga.

³¹ Ibid.

³² *Wesleyan Juvenile Offering*, vol X (1854), p. 30.

³³ Lātūkefu, *Church and State in Tonga* (1974), p. 28.

When the rescue ship finally arrived in Tonga, Thomas was surprised to find out that it had brought three new missionary families, to prevent the mission from being abandoned again. The new arrivals were headed by Nathaniel Turner, and the other two were William Cross and Weiss. This new party decided to make their new base of operations at Nuku'alofa, while Thomas and Hutchinson carried on the work at Hihifo, until the decision was made by the brethren to close down the station for the time being. It was reopened in 1837.

Before the closure of the mission at Hihifo, Nathaniel Turner asked Ata if he would change his mind and accept Christianity. Ata replied:

I have and always have had a great love for Mr Thomas, and should be glad for him to continue with me, but I will not attend to your religion. My mind is fixed. I have often told Mr Thomas so. I told you so when you were living here, and my mind is quite fixed. It is good for you to attend to your God, and I will attend to mine; but I will not attend to yours.³⁴

Ata's refusal to accept Christianity, when combined with the fact that other places in Tonga were becoming receptive to the gospel, led Thomas and the missionaries to close the station.

On the Sunday before Thomas expected to leave Tonga, Taufa'āhau visited Thomas at Hihifo for the first time. The meeting of these two men started a relationship between them that continued for a long time, until Thomas left the country in 1859.

TURNER AND CROSS AT NUKU'ALOFA

Turner could be called the true founder of the Wesleyan Mission, in the sense that he saved the future of the church in Tonga, although Walter Lawry pioneered it, and Thomas served for a long period. Turner's experience and convictions about missionary work changed the situation, in which Thomas and Hutchinson had been struggling.

³⁴ Turner's journal, July 16, 1829.

Turner was born in 1793, at Wybunbury, Cheshire, in England. He was ordained on January 23, 1822, and left England for New Zealand, where he became a missionary to the Maori people from 1823 to 1827. Cross was appointed to accompany and support Turner. Cross was born in 1797, at Cirencester, Gloucestershire. He was a lay preacher, and later volunteered for missionary work.

The new missionaries thought that a second “abandonment of the missionary work in Tonga would be disgraceful and probably fatal”.³⁵ Turner’s missionary experiences in New Zealand equipped him for the work in Tonga. He knew the Maori language, and this helped him to learn Tongan. He had learned the Maori culture and ways of life, and these were similar in some ways to those of the Tongans. More important was his experience of facing hardships from the hostile Maoris. He was assaulted several times, and his home was burnt down. On one occasion, his wife escaped from a serious attack.

The new missionaries arrived at Hihifo on November 2, 1827, and moved to Nuku‘alofa, the central part of Tongatapu. Nuku‘alofa, at this time, had already been under the influence of Christianity, through the successful work of the four Tahitians, whose names were Hape, Tafeta, Borabora, and Longi. Hape and Tafeta called at Nuku‘alofa on their way to Fiji from Tahiti and felt that they should establish a mission in Tonga. The other two Tahitians joined them later. They built a chapel and ran a school, and were greatly supported by chiefs named Aleamotu‘a Tupou and Ulakai, son of Tuku‘aho, who moved from Hihifo to join the mission at Nuku‘alofa because of Ata’s resistance. About 300 people around Nuku‘alofa met regularly for worship.

The day after his arrival, Turner went to Nuku‘alofa and worshipped in the chapel the Tahitians had built. Nearly 240 people attended the service, and Turner was impressed by their success. A school and other kinds of work were being established, local congregations were growing, and many of the Tongans appeared to be interested in Christianity. In his report to the

³⁵ Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church*, vol I, Tonga and Samoa, p. 39.

Committee in London, Turner stated why they wanted to work in Nuku'alofa:

1. Because we believe there is a people here prepared for the Lord, and sincerely desiring to be taught the way of truth.
2. Because the chief and the people are so solicitous for European missionaries to reside among them to instruct them, and to form them something to read.
3. Because the present teachers themselves are very solicitous for us to come, principally because they are anxious to go to the Feejees, where they were appointed, as soon as an opportunity offers.
4. Because this place appears to us of greater importance than any other of the Island of which we have yet heard, on account of its central situation, its being near to several other populous towns and villages, to which we could have easy access, and its being near to the best anchorage ground for vessels, and the best placed, by far, for buying property.³⁶

The growing experience of Turner and Cross contributed to the breakthrough in the work of the mission. Unlike Thomas and Hutchinson, the new missionaries spent no time in learning the language, for they had done it before their arrival. Early in 1828, Turner and Cross revived the school that had been established by the Tahitians, and, within a short time, there were 80 pupils. Their task at this stage was to “teach both children and adults” to read their language. Within six months, the school roll had grown to 150, and several students had been able to “spell out words of five to six syllables . . . and to read the written hymns, prayers, and lessons from scripture”.³⁷ Cross told the Committee about their progress:

Our school continues to go well, and several are making considerable progress, both in reading and writing. The reading

³⁶ Turner, committee, January 14, 1828, WMMS.

³⁷ Cross' journal, September 21, 1828, March 17, 1828, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, vol VI, 1829-1831, p. 130.

lessons, which I have prepared, are selected chiefly from the miracles and parables of our Lord. This, I think, will not only answer for school lessons, but will be found very useful as portions to be read at family worship till we can furnish them with a complete translation of some parts of the word of God.³⁸

After 14 months, the work at Nuku‘alofa started to bear fruit. The missionaries baptised seven converts, and gave each of them a name from the Bible. They were Mafile‘o (Nah), Takanoa (Moses), Lavola (Elisha), Kavamoelelo (Barnabas), Lavemai (Joseph), and Moungevalu (John). There were also classes for those who had become church members. Turner continued, in his report to the Committee, to sum up the spiritual life of the people.

Many of them evince a genuine work of God upon their minds. Their ardent desire for instruction, their great progress in spiritual knowledge, and their strict morality of conduct afford us the most satisfactory proof that they are, indeed, turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.³⁹

In these classes, members learned the doctrines of the Wesleyan church, and to respect the authority of the Bible. They learned the doctrine of the Trinity: that there is only one God, His son, Jesus Christ, is Saviour, and the Holy Spirit is the Comforter. Heaven and hell were also taught. There were also love feasts organised for the members, at which they sang hymns, prayed, and shared testimonies. As a result, the work of the missionaries made rapid progress, according to Turner.

Our congregations are increasingly large, from 400 to 500 deeply-attentive hearers being present every Sabbath, many of whom are truly athirst for the life-giving word.⁴⁰

The chapel, built in 1826, by the Tahitian teacher, became far too small, and the demand for a new chapel was very urgent. On May 5, 1830, the construction of a new chapel began, and it was completed by September 3.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

The day it was opened, there were 1,000 in the building, and many others outside.

THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE MISSIONARIES AND TAUFĀ'ĀHAU: 1829-1834

COMMENCEMENT OF MISSION WORK AT HA'ĀPAI

The success of the mission at Nuku'alofa opened the doors for Christianity to spread out to other parts of the country. It was not long after his acceptance of Christianity that Chief Aleamotu'a Tupou sent one of his relatives to Finau 'Ulukalala, ruler of the Vava'u group, and also his nephew, Ulakai, to Taufā'āhau in Ha'apai, to advise them to accept the new religion. It was clear that when a chief accepted Christianity, he had tremendous influence in turning his people from heathenism to Christianity.

As a result of this meeting with Ulakai, Taufā'āhau decided to find out more about the new religion. He made a few trips to Tongatapu in 1827 and 1828. During these trips, he met the missionaries and his relatives, particularly Aleamotu'a and Ulakai, who had been following the new ways of Christianity. He observed closely these people's lives, and began to imitate them. Thomas West wrote about what started to happen to Taufā'āhau:

[F]rom that time, he voluntarily abandoned various heathen amusements, to which he had been addicted; and he began to observe, in some measure, the sanctity of the Sabbath day, by ceasing from all his ordinary occupations. So anxious was he to make a beginning in the service of God, and to initiate the instruction of the people under him, after the example of the missionaries in Tongatapu, that he employed the service of a rough, ungodly sailor, then residing under his protection, to trace the letters of the alphabet upon the sands of the seashore, for the benefit of those who wished to learn; and he ordered the same man to conduct

prayers to the God of the foreigners, in a house, which he devoted to that purpose.⁴¹

Taufa'āhau's interest in the gospel increased. In October, 1828, he made another trip to Tongatapu, where he met Nathaniel Turner. He told Turner that he wanted a missionary to be sent to Ha'apai to teach his people. He had seen the missionaries, and their teaching program, at Nuku'alofa, and was impressed.⁴² With Ata strongly refusing to accept Thomas and Christianity, the missionaries looked at the urgency of Taufa'āhau's request and decided to close the mission and send Thomas to Ha'apai, where there were signs of success.⁴³ However, because they had to get approval from the Committee in London for their decision, they decided to send a native convert, Pita Vi, to Ha'apai.⁴⁴

Pita Vi was a native of Ha'apai, and one of the first people to be baptised in Tonga as a result of the work of Turner and Cross at Nuku'alofa. He is regarded as the first Tongan preacher and teacher. Taufa'āhau revisited Tongatapu in August, 1829, and was deeply disappointed by the missionaries' decision to send a native teacher to Ha'apai. He then refused to take Pita Vi with him. He sailed back to Ha'apai, and, on the way, he and his men met a severe storm, which almost stopped them from reaching Ha'apai. On arrival, Taufa'āhau believed that the storm was a "divine judgment" for not taking Pita Vi with him.⁴⁵ He immediately decided to go back to Tongatapu to get Pita Vi.

Undoubtedly, the Spirit of God helped Vi to apply his new faith to his own people, without the help of the missionaries. He didn't have a deep knowledge of the Bible and missionary work. He used all he had learned from the missionaries to teach his people. Equipping them with alphabet cards and manuscript books, pens, and paper, Vi opened the way for his

⁴¹ West, *Ten Years in South Central Polynesia* (1865), pp. 357-358.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 227, 359.

⁴³ Henry to Leigh journal, March 10, 1829, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, vol VI (1830), p. 181.

⁴⁴ Turner's journal, July 16, 1829, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, vol VI (1830), p. 128.

⁴⁵ West, *Ten Years in South Central Polynesia* (1865), p. 359.

people to learn to read and write, which resulted in Taufa'āhau's giving his whole attention to it. Vi started a school at Lifuka, the main island of the group, and Taufa'āhau's place of residence. In his first letter to the missionaries at Tongatapu, Vi told them that the mission had been established. Taufa'āhau had commanded his people to learn to read and write. They destroyed the objects of their traditional religion, and the houses in which they were kept.⁴⁶

Taufa'āhau soon began to doubt the power of the traditional gods. On one occasion, he took Vi and others with him to test the power of his old god Haehaetahi to see if it was real. When they arrived at the house of the priestess, who served this god, Taufa'āhau wanted to drink *kava*,⁴⁷ and asked her to let Haehaetahi come and have *kava* together with them. Taufa'āhau had already prepared a club made from the soft stalk of a young banana tree to strike the god. Vi told the story:

Hereupon the old priestess became inspired by Haehaetahi, and, in the meanwhile, Taufa'āhau had prepared a great drinking cup, large enough for four persons to drink from; for he knew, he said, that "Haehaetahi was a god fond of drink". The cup was then filled and handed by Taufa'āhau to the priestess, but, while her face turned upwards in the act of drinking off its contents, Taufa'āhau struck her a great blow on the forehead, which sent the god (or priestess) rolling on the ground. He then gave another blow, and, raising a shout of victory, cried out that the god was slain.⁴⁸

All the keepers of the sacred objects were threatened by Taufa'āhau's act, and were afraid that he would do the same to them. From then on, Taufa'āhau became very "mischievous to them all".⁴⁹ He burned down the idol houses, and destroyed the sacred objects. He even destroyed a large

⁴⁶ Thomas' journal, December 22, 1829, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, vol VI (1829-1831), p. 421.

⁴⁷ *Kava* is a traditional drink, mostly used in ceremonies, made from the dried root of the *kava* plant.

⁴⁸ West, *Ten Years in South Central Polynesia*, p. 364.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

canoe, which had been set aside as sacred to the gods.⁵⁰ Sacred clubs and the *kava* bowls of the priests were also destroyed. On one occasion, he broke the necks of five idols in front of the people.⁵¹

Taufa'āhau was not only zealous to show his people the powerlessness of the traditional gods, but he wanted to demonstrate the power of the Christian God. An opportunity for this occurred when he was on a canoe voyage. Taufa'āhau saw a shark, which he believed was his god Taufa'itahi. He threw a spear at the shark, thinking that if it was truly a god, the spear would miss, and that is what happened. Pita Vi and another man were then thrown into the sea to fetch the spear and bring it to the island of the Ha'ano, where the rest would be waiting. Taufa'āhau reasoned that, if the Christian God was truly God, He would save Vi and the other man from the sharks. The two men were not attacked by the sharks, and arrived safely on shore with the spear.

For some time, the missionaries at Tongatapu had been considering the transfer of Thomas from Hihifo to Ha'apai, for they knew that the future of Tonga was in the hands of Taufa'āhau. On July 29, 1829, Thomas left the work at Hihifo and moved to Nuku'alofa to wait for a boat to Ha'apai. During his six months of waiting at Nuku'alofa, he made rapid progress in learning the Tongan language from Turner and Cross. He also saw the methods and success of their work.

Early in January, 1830, a canoe arrived at Nuku'alofa from Ha'apai, bringing Pita Vi to take Thomas, without further delay, because Taufa'āhau and the people were hungry for more Christian instruction. Unlike Ata and the chiefs of Tongatapu, Taufa'āhau's desire for a missionary was not for their goods and property, but for more teaching on the new faith that he had embraced. When inviting Thomas to Ha'apai, Taufa'āhau said to him:

I will be thankful to your body only, and I will clothe you in native cloth if you want it. I will feed you free of expense, you shall not

⁵⁰ Turner's journal, October 31, 1829, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, vol VI (1829-1831), p. 340.

⁵¹ Cross' journal, July 1, 1830.

trade. I will build you a house, or get one made directly for you. I will build you a chapel, and come to it myself, and send all my people to be taught by you, and, if you wish to go away, you shall take away whatever you please, and go where you please.⁵²

Thomas finally arrived in Lifuka on January 30, 1830. By this time, there was widespread support for the new religion, through the work of Vi, and the great influence of the King. Thomas told the Committee in London, there are no more than three islands out of 20, but the people have turned to the Lord. I have had 250 to 400 hearers every time I have preached.⁵³

It would be wrong to say that Christianity was accepted without any difficulty. The chiefs of the Ha'apai were very upset by Taufa'āhau's commitment to the new religion. They made plans to kill him. They used every available method to fulfil their plan, and, on one occasion, their plan almost succeeded. One of Taufa'āhau's pre-Christian wives was going to go back to her home in Vava'u, because Taufa'āhau rejected her, after living with her for a year. Before her return, a festival was held according to custom. This was a good chance for Taufa'āhau's enemies to get rid of him, because many of them attended the festival. During the festival, the King became very ill, and it appeared he was going to die. It was believed that one of his enemy chiefs had given him a drink that had been poisoned. The people made preparations for his funeral. At this stage, Cross was at Lifuka on a visit. Vi called Thomas and Cross to help. While the two missionaries were helping Taufa'āhau to vomit out the poison, a little group of Christians spent the whole night in prayer until the next morning. Pita Vi wrote about what happened:

No Christian slept that night. As daylight appeared, a wailing cry was heard. At first we thought the King was gone, but we soon learned that it was a cry of joy from the King's sister, because the King was better. Thus the Lord heard our prayers and blessed the medicine to the King's recovery. Our King lived, and, therefore, we

⁵² G. S. Rowe, *A Pioneer: A Memoir of Revd J. Thomas* (1855), p. 50.

⁵³ Thomas' journal, January 25, 1830, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, vol VI (1829-1831), p. 402.

rejoiced in the Lord. From that time, Christianity (the *Lotu*) spread, and increased in strength, while the kingdom of the devil became weaker and weaker.⁵⁴

Up to the time of his poisoning, Taufa'āhau had not yet really joined the Christians in their religious meetings, because he was still busy in testing the power of both the heathen gods and the Christian God. When he learned of the chiefs' plan to kill him, he openly joined the Christians in their prayer meeting, and burnt more objects used for worship in the old religion. Most important was his decision to be baptised.

On the day before his baptism, there was a feast to celebrate the event. The following day (August 7, 1831), there was a big service of more than 2,000 people, who attended to witness the great step of faith their King was taking. Three of his children were ready to be baptised, named Sālote, David, and Josiah. Thomas recorded of this service:

When we got to the chapel, the chief and his three children were ready, seated on the right hand of the pulpit, all neatly dressed. I preached on Acts 2:32-41. I endeavoured to lead them to Christ. I exhorted them to repent and be baptised, every one of them. After the sermon, the chief (Taufa'āhau) stood, and, in a very humble and becoming manner, made a confession of his faith and his purpose to give himself and his children to Christ. He thanked the Lord, and the people in England, who had thus sent the good word to him and his people, and exhorted his people to give themselves to the Lord.⁵⁵

Taufa'āhau took the name "King George", because he heard from the missionaries about King George III of England, and greatly admired him. Recording his baptism, Thomas wrote in a large and bold handwriting "George Taufa'āhau, King in Lifuka".

After his baptism, Taufa'āhau still identified himself with the traditional marriage pattern of polygamy, until he was severely disciplined about the matter by one of the missionaries. When he became the ruler of Vava'u in 1833, he wanted to have some of his Vava'u predecessor's younger and

⁵⁴ West, *Ten Years in South Central Polynesia*, p. 368.

⁵⁵ Rowe, *A Pioneer: A Memoir of Revd John Thomas*, pp. 66-67.

more attractive wives. Peter Turner, a new missionary to the group, and cousin of Nathaniel Turner, terminated his membership in the church because of this. In the following year, he repented and married Lupe Pau'u in a Christian ceremony. Lupe Pau'u had been the principal wife of the Tu'i Tonga, Laufilitonga. She eloped with Taufa'āhau in 1833, and they were married by the missionaries in 1834. Taufa'āhau sent one of his wives, a Samoan, to her country. There is no record to indicate any contact between them after her return to Samoa.

Taufa'āhau became a local preacher and evangelist. Both he and his wife also became class leaders, assisting their people to grow in their spiritual life.

TAUFA'ĀHAU GOES TO VAVA'U

This new religion, which began in Tongatapu, spread to Ha'apai spontaneously. Vava'u was also ready to welcome the new religion, but there was no one to take it across to the group of islands. King George took the initiative for this mission in 1831. Prior to this time, Finau Ulukalala, the ruler of Vava'u, had shown some interest in Christianity, as a result of the advice he received from Aleamotu'a. In 1828, Finau used an English sailor to write to Nathaniel Turner at Nuku'alofa on his behalf, asking for missionaries. Turner read the letter, which was as follows:

Sir, I am so glad to hear that you are at Tongatapu teaching my friend Tupou (Aleamotu'a) to know the great God. I hope you will be so kind as to send to Port Jackson (i.e., Sydney) for more missionaries to come to my land, to teach me and my people. I am tired of my spirits, they tell me so many lies that I am sick of them . . . my island, sir, will turn to our Great God, because I am the only chief on the island. I have no one to control me, when I turn, they will all turn. To be sure, I did try to take a ship, but I am sorry for it, there will be no more of that. . . . Be so kind, sir, to go as quick about missionaries as time will allow. So no more from me, a wicked sinner:

Finau; his mark XXX⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Turner's journal, April 3, 1828, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, vol VI (1829-1831), p. 53.

Because of the shortage of missionaries, Turner could not do anything about Finau's request. However, King George was keen to win Finau to the new religion, and went over to Vava'u with a missionary intent. The King took Pita Vi with him.

When they arrived at Vava'u, they had the first public Christian worship service in the group on Sunday, when Pita Vi preached the word of God before King George, Finau, and a big gathering. On the Monday following the first Christian worship, King George and Finau started to attack the old religion by burning and destroying the gods and their houses, and the sacred objects of worship. Finau gave orders to get seven of the principal gods and line them up. He then told them this, "I have brought you here to prove you. . . . If you are a god, run away, or you shall be burnt in the fire, which I have prepared." None of the gods moved. Finau gave another order to burn down both them and their houses. As a result, 18 temples, with their gods, were burnt down.⁵⁷ As Thomas West wrote, Finau then:

issued an order that the heathen temples under his control should be burnt down. Some of the chiefs still held aloof, and many people heard with alarm the threatened demolition of their pagan deities and sacred places. But, in the midst of all the divided opinions agitating the people, there were many willing hearts and hands ready to do the work. For three days the smoke of heathen fires and burning idols, darkened the azure sky of the Ha'afuluhao (Vava'u) and ascended as the incense of a spiritual sacrifice before the presence of that Great Being, by whose power and Spirit the glorious triumph had been brought about.⁵⁸

Peter Turner recorded an incident when King George and his men went to the god house at Makave, a small village near Neiafu, the capital of Vava'u. When the priest saw them, he thought they were coming to worship. He went inside the god house to pray for inspiration. The King then

⁵⁷ Farmer, *Tonga and the Friendly Islands* (1858), p. 211.

⁵⁸ West, *Ten Years in South Central Polynesia* (1865), p. 160.

rose, went into the god house, dragged out the priest, and anointed him plentifully with mud from the gutter, and threw him on one side, telling him, as an old deceiver, to have done with this foolishness. He then went into the house, brought out the god, wrapped in a bundle of native cloth and fine mats, and, to the astonishment and dread of some, began to disrobe the god. Fold after fold was taken off until the great god was seen in the form of a small spotted shell, which fell to the ground, to the surprise of some, and the shame of others, to see how they had been deceived, and some laughed outright. Fire was set to the house, and its glory ascended in flame and smoke.⁵⁹

The acceptance of Christianity in Vava'u, as in Ha'apai, caused a rebellion against Finau, led by his half-brother Lualala, who had been rebellious towards Finau for political reasons. Finau asked King George for help. The King and his warriors from Ha'apai put down the rebellion.

William Cross, who was at Nuku'alofa with Turner, was sent to Vava'u at the beginning of 1832 to keep the work going. On August 5 of the same year, Finau was baptised with the name Zephaniah, together with eight of his children. As has often been the case, a group was ready to accept Christianity, and it was the chief who held up their decision to accept Christ. Finau's conversion opened the way for a large group that had been awaiting such a move. Finau died on February 18, 1833, after nominating King George to take over the rulership of Vava'u. The King was then installed on April 30 of the same year. It is said that all the chiefs of Vava'u came together on this occasion. King George was now ruler both of Ha'apai and of Vava'u.⁶⁰

Under the influence and initiatives that Taufua'āhau had taken, Christianity was accepted nominally by the whole of Vava'u, and practically all of Ha'apai. Not only did it become part of the people's lives, but more and more people attended school, Bible classes, and prayer meetings. Before

⁵⁹ P. Turner, *Missionary Papers*, pp. 49-50, A 1506 Mitchell Library, Sydney, quoted in Lātūkefu, "King George Tupou I of Tonga", p. 12.

⁶⁰ Wood, *History and Geography of Tonga* (1932), p. 47.

the year 1832, 660 were meeting in class, and 1,012 attended school. On August 12, 1833, there were 2,000 present in the first love-feast in Vava'u.⁶¹ The 1833 report for the district meeting records the growth of Christianity in terms of church members and school attendance:

Tongatapu	955 members	204 on trial	840 scholars
Ha'apai	2,000 members	1,084 on trial	2,613 scholars
Vava'u	900 members	1,500 on trial	2,552 scholars ⁶²

Thomas West also recorded the following table to show the growth of full membership in the whole country for a period of six years:

Year	Number of Members ⁶³
1829	31
1830	72
1831	516
1832	1,422
1833	3,456
1834	7,451

THE REVIVAL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES: 1834-1837

THE BEGINNING AND OUTBREAK OF REVIVAL

The initial acceptance of Christianity in Tongatapu, Ha'apai, and Vava'u was followed by a period, which historians have referred to as "the consolidation of the mission work".⁶⁴ This period was marked by a religious revival called the "Pentecost of Tonga", which occurred in 1834. During this revival, the country, as a whole, embraced Christianity.

During the Evangelical revival, which took place in England in the 18th century, John Wesley emphasised the doctrine of sanctification and holiness. In his writings, he explained his views on social intercourse. Dancing and playing cards were to have no place in Methodist societies.

⁶¹ Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church*, vol I, Tonga and Samoa (1975), p. 54.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ West, *Ten Years in South Central Polynesia* (1855), p. 279.

⁶⁴ Lātūkefu, *Church and State in Tonga* (1974), pp. 68-69.

In his preaching, he denounced the immorality of the theatres and urged the city authorities not to approve the building of new theatres. Wesley campaigned strongly against liquor, and urged people to dress “cheap as well as plain”.⁶⁵ A man of action, Wesley practised his teachings by becoming involved in the problems of his day, and especially in helping those who were in need. Wesley’s followers took his teachings for granted, particularly missionaries, who were sent out by the Methodist Conference in England.

Up to June 11, 1834, there was a total staff of seven missionaries in Tonga, most of whom came from England. They were stationed to the three island groups as follows:

- Tongatapu John Thomas (chairman of Tonga District), William Cross and John Hobbs, who arrived in 1833 from New Zealand.
- Ha‘apai James Watkin and Charles Tucker, who arrived in 1833 from England.
- Vava‘u Peter Turner and David Cargill, who also arrived in Tonga on January 24, 1834.⁶⁶

Most of these missionaries, except Peter Turner in Vava‘u, interpreted Wesley’s teaching narrowly. They gave little emphasis in their preaching to the problems of Tongan society. They spent more time on the life to come, the eternal punishment of hell, and the everlasting life in heaven, rather than the present life, which the Tongans were facing.

Unlike his colleagues in the mission work, Peter Turner had a strong desire for revival. His experience of Methodist Revival at home made him realise the importance of a religious revival in Tonga, as a means whereby people could experience the personal conviction of the Holy Spirit. He wrote “I prefer some move among the people.”⁶⁷ The two missionaries at Vava‘u soon made an urgent call to “every place in the island to pray for

⁶⁵ H. G. Cummins, “School and Society of Tonga, 1826-1854”, MA thesis, Canberra ACT: Australian National University, 1977, p. 42.

⁶⁶ Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church*, p. 55.

⁶⁷ Turner’s journal, April 9, 1847.

the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God”.⁶⁸ Without any delay, the Christian leaders of the group “all agreed to meet in private at the throne of grace every day at noon to pray for revival”.⁶⁹

As a result, the revival started on Tuesday afternoon July 23, 1834. A local preacher named Isaiah Vovole, at the village of Utui, was preaching from Luke 19:41-42 on the compassion of Christ towards the city of Jerusalem. During the sermon, many felt the “spirit of deep conviction”, and began to cry out aloud for their sins:

[T]here came upon the congregation an overwhelming spirit of contrition. Every soul was prostrate before God, many cried aloud in agony, some making open confessions of past sins. Through the whole night, weeping and prayers for pardon continued at Utui. The morning was greeted with a shout of joy over the assurance of God’s forgiving love.⁷⁰

A light shower of rain stopped the service, but the people stayed awake for the whole night, waiting for the morning prayer meeting.

On the following Sunday, the village of Feletoa was seized by the same influence during a service attended by 500 people. Peter Turner described what happened, and this manifestation appeared similarly throughout the whole group of islands:

[T]he chapel was still full of people crying for mercy . . . and about 200 were lying on the floor, as dead persons, who swooned away by complete exhaustion of body and the overwhelming manifestation of the saving power. We were quite astonished, and stood in

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, September 1, 1834, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, vols VIII and IX, 1835-1836, p. 148.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ G. C. Findlay, and W. W. Holdsworth, *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Society*, vol III, (London, 1921), quoted in Lātūkefu, *Church and State in Tonga*, p. 71.

speechless awe before God . . . it was wonderful and far surpassed all I had seen or read of.⁷¹

For two weeks, the “holy epidemic” spread from village to village, and from island to island. The sounds of weeping and confession were heard everywhere. Expressions like “Praise the Lord. I never knew Jesus until now. Now I do know Him. He has taken away all my sins. I love Jesus Karaise (Christ)” and “God be merciful to me a sinner”, were commonly heard. Turner reported:

While sitting in our house, we hear, on all sides, persons praying and crying for mercy. It was almost impossible to sleep, such was the earnestness of persons crying for mercy, and others coming to tell us that they had obtained the blessing of salvation.⁷²

Normal activities and school were affected during the revival as they came to a halt. In describing the situation, Peter Turner said, “Persons . . . are so much affected that we have to turn the school into a prayer meeting.”⁷³ During the first four days of revival, more than 1,000 were converted.⁷⁴

King George witnessed the revival, and thought it was something evil, but Peter Turner told him that it was another Pentecost, similar to the revivals among the Wesleyans in England. Since King George’s fall into polygamy the previous year, the missionaries had been constantly praying for him, for the touch of the Holy Spirit to come upon his life. During a prayer meeting, on July 31, the king fell on his knees on a mat in his pew, trembling, and literally roaring. Being at length enabled to exercise faith in the merits of the Redeemer, he exultingly exclaimed, “The Lord has pardoned my sins.”⁷⁵

⁷¹ Turner’s journal, July 23, 1834.

⁷² Turner, “Tonga District Meeting Minutes”, vol 1, 1832, quoted in Wood, *Overseas Missions*, p. 56.

⁷³ Turner’s journal, August 11, 1834.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, September 1, 1834, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, p. 49.

⁷⁵ D. Cargill, *Memoirs of Mrs Margaret Cargill*, p. 64, quoted in Wood, *Overseas Missions*, p. 57.

The missionaries and the Christians of Vava'u claimed this as his "true conversion". He was officially accepted as a local preacher on October 9, 1834, and preached his first sermon at the village of Makave. Most of the people who heard his sermon wept for joy. At the opening of a new chapel at Neiafu, the King preached on Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem.

While Vava'u was experiencing the "new touch from above", King George sent a message to Ha'apai asking the people to withdraw from secular work for a few days and "occupy their time and attention with spiritual subjects".⁷⁶ When they did this, revival broke out in Ha'apai. The people called it *kuo loko 'a e 'ofa* (the love is come).⁷⁷ Missionary Charles Tucker, who was there at the time, wrote:

The Lord made the place of His feet glorious, the stout-hearted began to tremble. There was a mighty shaking among the dry bones. . . . The people were melted into tears on every hand and many of them cried aloud by reason of the disquietude of their souls. O, what a solemn, but joyful, sight to behold! One thousand or more individuals bowed before the Lord, weeping at the feet of Jesus, and praying in an agony of soul. I never saw such distress, never heard such cries for mercy, or such confessions of sins before. These things were universal, from the greatest chiefs in the land to the meanest of the people.⁷⁸

In Ha'apai, as in Vava'u, many were surprised and frightened to see people's actions in the revival. They ran away with the idea that a fearful contagious disease was affecting the people. Soon they felt the power of revival. For a whole week, people stopped working to attend services twice every day. Tucker called it a "week of Sabbaths".⁷⁹ Schools had

⁷⁶ *Wesleyan Juvenile Offering*, March 1852, p. 28.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Tucker's journal, September 10, 1834, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, p. 150.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

been closed for several weeks, because classes were replaced by “prayer meetings six times a day”.⁸⁰

In a fortnight, the impact of the revival spread throughout the group. Over 2,000 were converted.⁸¹ On some islands, the whole population, with “not one exception”, were baptised and attended classes for Bible study and prayer.⁸² After 12 months of weeping, public confessions, and joyous conversions, Tucker reported that there was only one person not baptised in the whole of the Ha‘apai.⁸³

The revival reached Tongatapu in October, 1834, but its impact was not as strong as in Vava‘u and Ha‘apai. There still remained many heathen who continued to oppose Christianity.

THE EFFECT OF THE REVIVAL: HEATHEN OPPOSITION

The revival divided the country more clearly into Christians and heathen, particularly in Tongatapu. The two northern groups had experienced a people movement to Christianity during the revival. Tucker reported that there was only one heathen in the Ha‘apai group.⁸⁴ However, the heathen were stronger than ever in Tongatapu since the coming of Christianity. The chiefs of the island felt that the new values and moral standards of Christianity threatened and undermined their privilege and prestige, politically, socially, and religiously.

The chiefs and their followers had been waiting for a chance to persecute their fellow citizens, who had turned to the new religion. It was not until the outbreak of the revival in Tongatapu that the heathen became jealous of the success of the Christian God in turning the people from the beliefs and practices of their forefathers to Christian ways. During a most sacred first-fruits ceremony of the heathen, the ‘Inasi, the Christians insulted the heathen. As a result, the heathen started to persecute the Christians, and

⁸⁰ Tucker to the committee, September 1, 1834.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., September 17, 1834, p. 223.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 220.

⁸⁴ Tucker to the committee, September 10, 1830, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, p. 238.

this led to a series of wars. The heathen chased Christians out of their villages, burning down chapels, and disturbing their worship, whenever possible.⁸⁵

At the village of Talafo‘ou, east of Tongatapu, the Christian chief, and his people, were ordered to leave the place immediately, and then their chapel and houses were set on fire.⁸⁶ Another village, Utulau, and two other places, received the same treatment. The heathen drove the people away, burnt their chapels and their property.⁸⁷ During the opening of a new chapel at the village of Nukunuku, near Nuku‘alofa, the chief of the village, Tu‘ivakano, and hundreds of his people, accepted Christianity, and joined the church. After the opening ceremony, the heathen took the chief prisoner, and stripped him of the title of Tu‘ivakano, and gave it to another man. The Christians were driven from the village, and they took refuge at Nuku‘alofa, where chief Aleamotu‘a Tupou built a fortification for them. On the first Sunday of the exile at Nuku‘alofa, a service was held for them. Watkin said that guards were “posted at various parts of the fortified wall of the village. All the watchers”, he wrote, “had teachers with them, and held religious services at their respective stations”.⁸⁸ The heathen chief then made a plan to depose Aleamotu‘a and give the title to someone loyal to their cause. Aleamotu‘a appealed to King George for help, and he came with the chiefs and people of Ha‘apai and Vava‘u. They arrived at Tongatapu on January 1, 1837. Seven days later, war broke out, and it was purely a “religious and holy war”. Basil Thomson describes it thus:

[A] missionary war, a crusade, in which the club and the Bible were linked against the powers of darkness, and no knight errant ever went against the crescent with greater zest than the new converts showed in their quarrel with their heathen countrymen.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Thomas to secretaries, December 6, 1834, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, p. 238.

⁸⁶ Thomas’ journal, December 6, 1834, quoted in *Missionary Notices*, p. 152.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ B. Thomson, *The Diversions of a Prime Minister* (1894), pp. 350-351.

King George and his warriors destroyed two heathen fortresses and killed 300 men, women, and children. The burning down of the heathen gods' houses, objects of worship, and sacred places followed this. The heathen then promised not to cause any further persecution of Christians. However, in 1840, fighting broke out again at Hihifo led by chiefs Ata and Vaha'i. The King returned to Nuku'alofa again with his warriors from the north. Before going to Hihifo, King George told his men:

We did wrong in the last war (1837) when we didn't fight as Christians. Then our object was not to save, but to destroy. Now, I tell you all that we must not fight in that way again. If the enemy come out of their fort tomorrow morning, every man must try to seize them, but not to shoot them, except in cases of life and death.⁹⁰

When they got Hihifo, the King told his men to invite their relatives to leave the fort before their attack, and many accepted the invitation. The King's warriors then moved forward to attack, but the heathen surrendered immediately, and no lives were lost. All the heathen and their property were spared. Another fight broke out at Pea, but it came to a halt on June 26, 1840, as the heathen were easily persuaded to make peace.

After these wars, the heathen did not cause any further trouble for the Christians. King George's political position was further secured and consolidated. His leadership in the wars made him well known and accepted by the chiefs of the Tu'i Kanokupolu line, a reversal of their previous attitude in 1827.

THE EFFECT OF THE REVIVAL: MISSION DEVELOPMENT

The outstanding result of the revival was a tremendous growth in church membership. By the beginning of 1835, there were 3,602 new members out of a total of 7,838 in Tonga: 3,061 in Vava'u, 3,448 in Ha'apai, 929 in Tongatapu, and 400 in Niua Toputapu.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Wood, *History and Geography of Tonga*, p. 49.

⁹¹ Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist church*, vol I, p. 58.

The revival also had far-reaching implications for the mission, in its outreach within Tonga, and to the different parts of the Pacific Islands world. Peter Turner reported that, after the revival, many young men in Vava'u had a desire to work for God. In 1835, a group of 150 people went over to Niua Fo'ou to serve God. Later, Turner and his wife took 500 teachers and 15 other Tongans to Niua Toputapu. Before they reached the place, they ran into a hurricane. Turner recorded that the Tongans had no fear at all. They sang hymns and rejoiced. Through this outreach, Turner baptised the leading chief of the island, and his wife, together with many others, including 200 children, 290 couples, who were married in a Christian ceremony, and 557 meeting in class.⁹²

Another important result of the revival was the taking of the gospel to Fiji and Samoa. Tongan evangelists and teachers, like Joel Bulu, Sailosi Fa'one, James Havea, and Paula Vea, and many others, went to Fiji with the gospel. The District Meeting on January 2, 1835, decided to send William Cross and David Cargill to Fiji, and Peter Turner to Samoa, to supervise the work of the Tongan missionaries. Alan Tippett, an Australian anthropologist and Methodist missionary, who has done extensive studies on the Pacific Islands, wrote that these movements in the church "represented the nucleus of a great web that broke through the frontiers of Polynesia into Melanesia".⁹³ From this point, the missionary outreach of the church started, and has been extended. Tippett further wrote that the church "never lost its missionary passion", and became "the greatest missionary island church of the Pacific".⁹⁴ Since the revival, the church has sent Tongan missionaries to Fiji, Samoa, New Hebrides, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and even to the Aboriginals of northern Australia.

For the first time, commoners knew that they had a hope for life after death. Everybody had this hope, through faith in Christ, irrespective of their social status. This hope was illustrated in the following testimonies, recorded by Robert Young, a missionary commissioner in 1853:

⁹² Ibid., p. 59.

⁹³ A. Tippett, *People Movements in Southern Polynesia* (1971), p. 107.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 107-108.

Lote Ikahihifo:

I have long enjoyed the work of God in heart. I was converted at Feletoa. I know that my life is short, that hell is a terrible place, and I wish to use diligence. I enjoy peace with God, and pray much to God that I may be filled with grace. In times of temptation, I seek Christ, feeling, as I do, that I cannot trust or depend upon myself.

Iaiakimi Taufa:

When the gospel reached Tonga, I heard, and was convinced of its truth, but not saved. I was converted at the great revival here. In reading the book of the prophet Isaiah, I was powerfully impressed. . . . One night it appeared to me as though light shone within, and brought to my view my many sins. . . . I saw that Christ alone could save, and that nothing else was sufficient for me. When the Lord saved me, I felt an immediate desire to praise him, and to show others the way to that good, which I had obtained.

Mosese Lomu:

I wish to speak of the goodness of God to my soul. The devil obstructs, but Christ helps me, and commands me to speak. I thought to let the old man speak, but the Lord has opened my mouth. When young, I joined with all who despised Christ, His servants, and His work. I grew in stature, and the Lord worked in my soul. . . . I then determined to give my heart to God, and sought him earnestly. I heard a sermon on the subject "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ". I heard of the shame some would experience, who would be there, and I thought I must be there. I found the Lord, and now "the love of Christ constraineth". This is that which urges me to work on, till I get home to heaven to cast myself at Jesus' feet.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ R. Young, *The Southern World: Journal of a Deputation from the Wesleyan Conference to Australia and Polynesia* (1855), pp. 246-247.

The great revival in the early days of Christianity in Tonga had a long-standing effect on the life of the church. Peter Turner summarised it this way:

The results of this revival were: religion was realised and enjoyed, and the church was saved from dead formality. The people now understand the gospel, look for its blessings, and many have lived and died in the possession of entire sanctification. The churches in the Friendly Islands will bear comparison with any churches in the world for simplicity, zeal, and holiness.⁹⁶

BUILDING A CHRISTIAN STATE: 1837-1850

CODIFIED LAWS: 1839

Prior to the coming of the missionaries, there were no codified laws in the traditional society of Tonga. There were rules to regulate the relationships of the social classes to each other, within the society, and these could rightly be described as a “system of customary law”. To understand this law, one has to study all the traditions and customs which governed the different social classes in Tonga. Such a study is not within the limited scope of this article.

The political system of Tongan society was based on a monarchical system, controlled by the dynasties and the rule of the chiefs. In all cases, the chiefs had absolute power over commoners, and took their property whenever they wished. Crimes were only committed if they were done against one’s social superiors, and they were widely practised for social and religious reasons.

After the period of civil wars, and general acceptance of Christianity, some important political developments took place. One was the unification of Vava’u and Ha’apai under the rule of King George. The missionaries, at this time, began to call Tafufa’āhau “King George I of the United Kingdoms of Vava’u and Ha’apai”.⁹⁷ Tongatapu was still divided, and each chief and his people were responsible for their own affairs. During

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

⁹⁷ Cummins, “School and Society in Tonga, 1826-1954”, p. 131.

this period also, the chiefs' treatment of the common people became increasingly harsh and cruel. One reason for this was that the new concepts and values of Christianity, concerning man and his crimes, undermined the authority and privileges of the chiefs.

The rapid growth of Christianity, and the influence that some of the chiefs had upon this, left the missionaries with the conviction that there should be a codified law in a Christian society. On the other hand, King George's close association with the missionaries, and his understanding of Western civilisation, made him recognise that much of the customary law was incompatible with Christianity. It is quite obvious, although there is no documentary evidence for it in this study, that the missionaries must have told King George about the system of government in their homeland, where the King of England ruled the country, according to a written code of law. King George started to ask the missionaries to make some laws to regulate the life of his people. Sarah Farmer described the affairs of the country at this time, and the King's wish, thus:

King George (in Vava'u) was desirous of governing his people with wisdom and with kindness. He found that great evils arose from chiefs and private persons taking the law into their own hands. He wished that impartial justice should be dealt out to the poor as well as to the rich, to the servant as well as to the master.⁹⁸

Through the influence and help of the missionaries, King George determined to introduce the first written code of laws in the country, known as "The Vava'u Code". On November 20, 1839, the King officially promulgated the code in a *fono* (traditional and compulsory meeting, where people were informed of what their chief wanted them to do) at Pouono, a *mala'e* (meeting ground) at Neiafu. The King declared:

I, George, make known this my mind to the chiefs of different parts of Ha'afuluhao (Vava'u), also to all my people. May you be very happy.

⁹⁸ Farmer, *Tonga and the Friendly Islands* (1855), p. 264.

It is of the Lord of heaven and earth that I have been appointed to speak to you, He is King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, He is righteous in all His works, we are all the work of His hands, and the sheep of His pasture, and His will towards us is that we should be happy. Therefore, it is that I make known to you all, to the chiefs, and governors, and people, as well as different strangers and foreigners that live with me.⁹⁹

The code was not only famous because it was the “first to be declared”, but it was distinctive for the following reasons: it was the first step taken in limiting the power of the chiefs, and in suggesting to them that they should show love towards their people. Section 3 reads:

My (King George) mind is this, that each chief or head of a people shall govern his own people, and them only, and it is my mind that you each show love to the people you have under you. . . .

Section 4 reads:

It is my mind that my people should live in great peace, no quarrelling . . . but serve God in great peace and sincerity . . . they (the commoners) will work for you (chiefs) as you may require them . . . but I make known to you it is no longer lawful for you to *lunuki*, or mark their bananas for your use, or to take by force any article from them, but let their things be at their disposal.

The sacredness of the Sabbath was an important part of the missionaries’ teaching. Section 2 expressed this emphasis of the missionaries, and their concern for church services:

My mind is this, that all my people should attend to all the duties of religion towards God; the that they should keep holy the Sabbath day, by abstaining from their worldly occupations and labours, and

⁹⁹ From the original copy, cited in Lātūkefu, *Church and State in Tonga*, Appendix A, p. 221.

by attending to preaching of the word, and the worship of God in their places of worship.

Should any man on shore, or from on board ship, come to the chapel for the purpose of sport, or to disturb the worship, should he insult the minister or the congregation, he shall be taken and bound, and be fined for every offence, as the judge shall determine.

The Tongans took this law seriously, and regarded it in the same spirit as they observed the traditional taboos. Referring to this keeping of the Sabbath in Tonga, Young wrote:

Never had I previously observed such respect paid to the Sabbath of the Lord. The day appears to be exclusively devoted to religious services, and nothing meets the eye or ear infringing upon the sanctity of that blessed day, but everywhere incense and a pure offering seem to be presented to the Lord of Hosts. If the people are beheld coming from their habitations, it is that they may go up to the house of the Lord, and inquire in His holy temple. If a canoe is seen in the offing, it is conveying a local preacher to his appointment in some distant island, that he may preach unto the people, Jesus. If noises occasionally fall upon the ear, they are not those of revelry and strife, but of holy praise and fervent prayer going up to heaven.¹⁰⁰

This section on the Sabbath later became a part of the constitution of Tonga.

Premarital sexual relationships were widely practised in Tonga, and so the missionaries taught that sex was sacred, and not to be practised outside of marriage. King George included, therefore, in the Code the prohibition of adultery and fornication (Section 1). The sanctity of marriage and of the family had always been very important parts of the teaching of the missionaries. In order to protect the sacredness of marriage, Section 8 declared:

¹⁰⁰ Young, *The Southern World*, pp. 267-268.

In case a man leaves his wife and escapes, she shall claim his plantations, and whatever other property he may have left. In case a woman forsakes her husband, she shall be brought back again to him, and, in case she will not remain with him, it shall not be lawful for her to marry any other man, while her husband lives.

The chiefs and the people were also urged to cultivate the land industriously, to produce enough for their own needs, and to support the government and the chiefs.

UNIFICATION OF TONGA, AND THE 1850 CODE OF LAW

King George's ambition to unify Tonga under the supreme authority of the Tu'i Kanokupolu was fulfilled, following the death of the Tu'i Kanokupolu, and his great uncle, Aleamotu'a, Josaia Tupou, on November 18, 1845. He was very much dependent on Taufa'āhau's support, in his struggle to control many of the chiefs of Tongatapu. The King was then installed as Tu'i Kanokupolu on December 4, 1845. He immediately took over the rulership of the whole of Tonga, taking the title of King George Tupou I, Tu'i Kanokupolu. This was exactly what the chiefs of Tongatapu had feared.

In his concern for the country's development, King George decided to provide a more-detailed system of laws and government than the Vava'u Code of 1839 had been. He asked the missionaries for help and advice. Thomas West wrote:

With the rapid advance of education, the king felt the need of a more-comprehensive and complete code of laws for the government of his people. On this subject, he frequently and earnestly conversed with the missionaries, and finally applied for their official help in framing it.¹⁰¹

The missionaries immediately worked on a translation of this new code, and gave it to the King and his chiefs for consideration. The King and the

¹⁰¹ West, *Ten Years in South Central Polynesia*, pp. 211-212.

chiefs had several meetings to discuss the laws. They made alterations, amendments, and additions to the laws.

After drafting the new code, the King wanted to consult with the chiefs of Tongatapu. He and some of the chiefs from the northern groups sailed for Tongatapu in the mission vessel *John Wesley* to meet the chiefs there. In the first week of July, 1850, King George held his court at Nuku'alofa, during which time "the code was finally completed, and made law by public and regal authority".¹⁰² It was known as the 1850 code.

The most striking feature of the 1850 code was the further limiting of the power of the chiefs, and the consolidation of the new position of King. The law, referring to the King, reads:

1. The King, being the root of all government in the land, it is for him to appoint those who shall govern in his land.
2. Whatever the King may wish done in his land, it is with him to command the assemblage of his chiefs, to consult with thereon.
3. The King is the Chief Judge, and anything the Judges may not be able to decide upon, shall be referred to the King, and whatever his decision may be, it shall be final.¹⁰³

The prohibitions, outlined by the teaching of the missionaries, were again taken seriously in the code, and the sanctity of marriage received special emphasis once more. Article VII declared:

Let all know that the separating of man and wife is a difficult matter, since the marriage contract is a command of God. The minister must first marry them, but, in case of trial, and the crime proved, then the minister must pronounce them separated, in the large chapel, before all people, even as their marriage was performed. Then the writing of divorce shall be given to the innocent party.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 213.

¹⁰³ From the original, cited in Lātūkefu, *Church and State in Tonga*, p. 226.

Other important features of this code were the following:

Articles VII and IX: Punishments were provided for adultery and fornication.

Article XI: Dancing was strictly forbidden, as well as all heathen customs.

Article XVII: Abortion was considered a most-disgusting crime, highly deserving of punishment.

Article XXIX of the code dealt with the question of selling land. The law stated:

It shall not be lawful for any chief or people in Tonga, Ha‘apai, or Vava‘u to sell a portion of land to strangers (foreigners); it is forbidden; and any one who may break the law shall be severely punished.

Without this law, land ownership in Tonga might have had a very different outcome, and perhaps the country would have suffered the same problems as other countries of the Pacific, such as Fiji, Tahiti, and Hawaii have suffered. In replying to a letter written by Walter Lawry to King George, encouraging the King to hold fast to his idea, King George said:

My mind is that I will not verily sell any piece of land in this Tonga, for it is small. What of it can we sell? and what would be left for ourselves?

I verily wish to be the friend of Britain in friendly alliance, with all fellowship; but it is not my mind, nor the mind of my people, that we should be subject to any other people or kingdom in this world. But is our mind to sit down (that is, remain) an independent nation.

I am,
George Tupou.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ The king’s answer, dated June 25, 1854, cited in *Missionary Notices*, p. 51.

The codes of 1839 and 1850 laid the foundation for the future constitution of Tonga, on which a modern state had to be built. Although the missionaries offered their help and advice, King George and the chiefs made all the decisions about the laws, in the light of the new knowledge which they had received through the missionaries' teaching. From this time onward, King George and the chiefs governed the country in accordance with the codified laws, and the Christian principles embodied in them.

CONCLUSION

Time is insufficient to write in detail the life of King George in this study. Words are inadequate to describe fully his outstanding achievements. It is true that he was a strong ruler, and that his ambitions and desires were fulfilled, either by force or in a peaceful way. But, beyond all this, was his thoughtfulness towards all his people. Irrespective of difficulties and hardships, no matter what they were, King George showed his interest and affection for Tonga.

The King's Christian character was his outstanding merit. He grew in his faith in Christ, inspired by the examples of both the missionaries and his fellow countrymen. His work in uniting Tonga into a kingdom was encouraged by his Christian devotion. He loved Christ and believed that all who loved Him should be one. With earnestness, he led his people in obeying Christ's command to spread the gospel within Tonga, and wherever people languished in ignorance of the love of Christ for them.

King George was anxious, not only to spread Christianity in Tonga, but to introduce the best from the outside world, provided these things were adapted to his country. For example, he gave great attention to the education of the people, and the rule of law in a Christian society. Tonga's political stability depended upon this. It is true that no other ruler in the Pacific was equal to him in the last century, and, indeed, because of his selfless love and concern for his people, Tonga, alone, among the Pacific peoples, has not been subject to any colonial power. This freedom of Tonga is his monument, and we can thank God for his wisdom in guiding Tonga through those troubled times.

The secret of the King's influence on the growth of Christianity in Tonga was his deep spirituality – his simple, strong, and certain faith. He was a local preacher and evangelist. He emphasised meeting in classes, obedience to Christian teaching, destroying the old beliefs, and, in all these things, he set an example in his own life. Heb 11:4 tells us that Abel, though dead, through his faith, is still speaking. With reverence, we can say that King George, though dead, is still speaking to Tongans today, through his life and example. There is a Tonga proverb, which says, "*Kuo mapaki 'a e fa ka 'oku kei 'alaha hono tu'unga*", which means, "The flower of the pandanus has fallen, but its sweet scent lingers on." This is true of King George.

Today, as the chiefs and people of Tonga honour the memory of this noble man, who was friend, father, and leader of this people, they must be conscious of the fact that they cannot uphold and maintain Tonga with anything else, but only with the love of Christ, and Christ-likeness of character that was manifested in King George. Those who love the church, and desire to see its life and work growing, will only see this happen by following the example set by King George I.

Surely, a great soul has passed away. We look back with thanksgiving for his life and work, as we share the blessings, which flowed from them. The church has grown like a mustard seed. Many helped in sowing the seed, the missionaries, the King, and the chiefs, the people; later generations watered and cared for it, but God gave the increase.

APPENDICES

Missionaries' Descriptions of King George

APPENDIX A

Journal of John Thomas, April, 1831, Lifuka
Present progress of the gospel in the Ha'apai group

Since we returned from Tonga, the King and his people have erected a large building for divine worship, it was opened the 10th instant, and the Lord condescended to visit and bless us while assembled together. We had

from 2,000 to 3,000 present each time, and joy and delight sat upon every countenance, and praise flowed from nearly every heart. O, could the friends of Jesus have seen this goodly company, who have renounced the cause of sin and idolatry, and espoused that of Jesus. Could they have seen the King and his people – from the least to the greatest – from infant to the old, venerable, grey-headed chief, bowing with age – all acknowledging the Lord for their God, O how happy they would have been, and what praise would they have rendered to God! Our King came up to our house after the service; he seemed very glad, and informed me that many, very many, had that day turned to the Lord. It did my heart good to hear that several chiefs, whom I had often talked to on the subject, had that day chosen the Lord for their God. Glory be to God! We see one stake after another taken out of the enemy's tent, and it is almost demolished and swept away. Idolatry bows and expires at Jesus' sacred name: and in every island of this group there are some that worship the true God.

APPENDIX B

Journal of Charles Tucker, September 12, 1835, Ha'apai

An account of the piety, humility, and zeal of King George, and his emancipation of the slaves

I heard the King preach last evening. The scene was interesting and imposing. The great court house (upwards of 70 feet long) would not nearly contain all the people. I believe every chief, and all the local preachers on the island, were present. I did, indeed, praise the Lord for what my eyes saw, and for what my ears heard, and for what my heart felt. While sitting behind the royal preacher, and hearing him proclaiming the humility and the love of the Saviour, and the cleansing and atoning efficacy of His precious blood, and the obligations we are under to serve to glorify Him, I thought, How changed the scene! What hath God wrought! Only a few years have rolled away since the King and all the people were assembled in this house, in order to prepare their guns, spears, clubs, and every other deadly weapon they could command, in order to destroy their fellow creatures. Then, not one among them had any knowledge of God, but they were all heathens, brutal and savage in the extreme. Now they are

assembled to worship the Lord, and to hear words whereby they may be saved. And the very individual who before led them forth to battle is now pointing out to them the way to heaven, and entreating them to imitate their Saviour, and manifest their love by keeping all his commandments. The King conducted the singing, and preached with the greatest plainness and simplicity, and in strict accordance with the oracles of God.

I had a long and very interesting conversation this morning with the King. Among other subjects, that of slavery was discussed. I gave him my views of it, and mentioned what had lately been done in England, and other countries, to abolish the system, and let the oppressed go free. He said several of his servants were slaves, they had been given to him by his father and other chiefs; but that he would go and liberate them all today. In the evening, we heard several persons crying very loudly, and, on inquiry, found it was the King's house: he had commanded the slaves to come together, and, then and there, set them at liberty. The scene was most affecting. He told them of the many evils, which were practised here during the reign of heathenism; and mentioned the mercy and love of God in sending the gospel, with all its concomitant blessing. He then told them how much he loved them, and said, "You are no longer slaves, but your own masters, you can go and reside wherever you please." They all burst into tears, and wept aloud; from which the King himself, with his Queen, could not refrain. Two of them begged of him to allow them to live and die with him, but he would by no means consent to their remaining as slaves. He (King George) said, "If you wish to reside a little longer with us, well; if you wish to go to any other island to reside, just please yourselves." I hope the above example will be the means of soon putting an utter end to slavery throughout these islands.

APPENDIX C

Journal of Revd W. A. Brook, January 23, 1840, Neiafu.

Royal donation, missionary anniversary

After our English prayer meeting this evening, a woman, sent from the King, put a small parcel into my hand, which, on opening, I found to contain ten sovereigns. A short note, which accompanied it, informed me

the enclosed was a donation from the Queen and His Majesty to the Missionary Society. We were very thankful. And we are sure they have given liberally; as I judge they have given not only of their abundance, but every sovereign they have in the world. It is quite in keeping with the character of King George, and he will leave it to God whether he has any more or not. He says he does not wish to lay up money.

I preached at the usual time to a large assembly, there being many present besides their Majesties from Ha‘apai, who have come over to be present at our Anniversary. My text was Gen XVII:1. At half-past 11, I preached in English, on Lk VII:22, “To the poor, the gospel”. Several were present from the ship in the harbour. In the afternoon, the King preached: his subject was Matt V:17-20, “Think not that”. I found it quite a treat to hear a native sermon, much more the sermon of a King.

I have been much engaged the last week in receiving the contributions, preaching, making arrangements for the meeting, together with examining two proofs of two parts of the book of Genesis, now in the press. I had hoped to have these done before this time.

I rose early, and attended the prayer meeting. At the time for service, the King took the pulpit, and preached a good missionary sermon to a very large congregation, on Isaiah XLIX:1-6, “Listen, O isles (Israel), unto me”. At the close, he appealed in a most urgent and powerful manner, to his audience to give, and to give liberally, to the cause of God. The King could do so with a good grace: he had given ten sovereigns, and I believe he would have given more, if he had possessed them. Blessed be God, for such a Preacher, and such a friend to the cause of missions; and who is himself the fruit of missionary labours.

APPENDIX D

Journal of John Thomas, March 17, 1846, Nuku‘alofa

Appointment of King George as Tu‘i Kanokupolu

I could not help exclaiming, as I looked back to bygone days – to what Tonga was then, in contrasting it with what it is now, “What hath God

wrought! Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee. The Lord hath made known His salvation: His righteousness hath He openly showed in the sight of the heathen”, so that the heathen themselves can see, and appear to be saying, “The Lord hath done great things for them”. King George is approved of because he is Christian, not in profession, merely, but in principle and practice, and if his valuable life be spared, we do not doubt that he will be a great blessing to the inhabitants of these seas. . . .

The King has taken up his residence at Nuku‘alofa, and great peace and harmony prevail; there are few exceptions from the two heathen forts, but we hope, ere long, that they will acknowledge him, and bring him the accustomed presents; but should they not do so, I believe he will “hold his peace”. . . .

George has two sons and one daughter, all of whom are married. The Lord has seen good to afflict him, since he has been made Governor-in-Chief, so that he has been much confined to his house, and has only preached a few times. He is now in a fair way, we hope, to recover, and our prayer is that, if consistent with the will of God, he may long be spared to his friends and his people. He is the first Tu‘i Kanokupolu preacher and class leader that ever existed, and bids fair to be a great blessing. He has an earnest desire that all his people should be brought to the knowledge of the truth; and, hence, he will take his turn with the local preachers, of whom we have about 100 at this time in Tonga, in preaching the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, not only in large chapels, but in the small villages, or wherever he is appointed by the missionary; and I may say, that a more humble and willing labourer in this work we have not on our plan. Many heathen have already turned to God, and others are very favourable. Praise God, O ye Britons, and pray for us, and for our King.

APPENDIX E

Journal of Revd Walter Lawry, General Superintendent of the Wesleyan Mission in Polynesia, May 29, 1848

In the afternoon, the King preached in the same pulpit. The attention of his audience was riveted while he expounded the words of our Lord, "I am come that ye might have life". The King is a tall and graceful person, in the pulpit, he was dressed in a dark coat, and his manner was solemn and earnest. He held in his hand a small bound manuscript book, but seldom looked at it. I believe, however, that his sermon was written in it. His action was dignified and proper, his delivery fluent, graceful, and not without majesty. He evidently engaged the attention of his hearers, who hung upon his lips with earnest and increasing interest. I perceived that much of what he said was put forth interrogatively, a mode of address which is very acceptable among the Tongans.

It was affecting to see this dignified man, stretching out his hands over his people, with one of his little fingers formerly cut off, as an offering to a heathen god; a usage among this people before they became Christians. But, while he bore this mark of pagan origin, he clearly showed, to him was grace given to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

APPENDIX F

King George's reply to Walter Lawry, Nuku'alofa, July 16, 1850

O Mr Lawry,

I write to you to make known my mind concerning the things you were inquiring about.

The good, which I have received through the Christian religion, is that I know the truth of the gospel, and its preciousness and value to my soul. I have received the forgiveness of my sins, and am justified by the blood of Christ. God has adopted me as His son, and made my soul anew. I have a hope beyond death, because of Christ.

The benefit of this religion to Tonga is that it has brought peace to our land. Its present settled and happy condition we all attribute to religion's influence. All the chiefs and people acknowledge this. This *Lotu* (Christianity) leaves everyone in his proper sphere. A chief is a chief still. A gentleman is a gentleman still. A common person is a common person still. So, it was not formerly (on account of rebellion and conspiracy). Our former state was only evil. Our land was verily bad; very different from the blessedness and goodness of these days.

I am very, very pleased in my mind with Mr Haw's Institution, and my will is that these schools of Mr Haw's teaching shall ever abide in this land, and be handed down for (the benefit of) our seed after us. I *fakamōnū'ia* (move the gift to my forehead, in token of reverent thanksgiving) the love of Britannia to me and my Kingdom, inasmuch as they have up their children to bring the glad tidings to the Tonga Islands.

I wish that many copies of the Sacred Book may be printed in England, that they may be brought for our people to read; by which they will know the truth of this religion, and be preserved from the Popish religion (Roman Catholic), which prowls about to scatter the people, who are ignorant of the scriptures. I desire that these missionaries may remain perpetually in this land. This is my will. If there should ever happen to be a time when the Lord would remove the missionaries from the Friendly Isles, it would be a painful dispensation to us.

O that the Lord would, at once, grant that long may be your life; Mr Lawry! That you may again come to this land, for beneficial is your visit; and if there is anything, which we would wish repeated, it is your visit.

I am,
George Tupou.

APPENDIX G

Charles Tucker record in *Wesleyan Juvenile Offering*, dated April, 1852

The King and the Queen have five classes under their care; the King is a nursing father, and the Queen is a nursing mother, to the church. The King

is a local preacher, and as obedient as any person of the plan. I have had him under my eye for the last 12 months, and can truly say that I never heard him speak a word, or saw, or heard of, any action or disposition manifested by him, on any occasion during that time, but such as became the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is not a more striking monument of the saving power of divine grace in all these islands than he is. The lion is become a lamb.

King George diligently applied his naturally powerful mind to the acquisition of such knowledge as was within his reach. Those portions of scripture, which were now issuing from the Mission press, he carefully and prayerfully studied, and gladly availed himself of every opportunity with the missionaries to ask questions respecting the meaning of various passages of scripture. He also learned to write, nor did the fact that the first rudiments of geography were taught by the missionary's wife prevent his attending the school.

King George acted as a friend and father to the missionaries. It was only for them to tell him their wants, and as far as he could, those wants were supplied.

Some years before, while in a state of heathenism, four men had done something for which they were to die. The people assembled; there sat the King, and at a little distance were the culprits. The sword was ready, and the executioner was prepared to strike the fatal blow. All waited for a word, or a nod, from His Majesty. He delayed when the men availed themselves of a Tonga custom, by rushing from their places and fleeing to the King; they touched his sacred person, took refuge in him, and were saved. Well did the customs of this people prepare them for understanding such passages of holy writ as the following: "Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies. I flee unto Thee to hide me", and "I said, Thou art my refuge".

King George manifested, in various ways, that he only required his duty to be pointed out to him, and he was ready to make the sacrifice necessary for its accomplishment.

GLOSSARY

‘Eiki Toputapu	sacred chief
Hou‘eiki	chiefs
Hau	conqueror, sovereign, in traditional society, the secular ruler of Tongatapu, or the Tonga group as a whole
Kau	class
Kainangaefonua	commoners (literally “eaters of the soil”)
Kolotau	fortress
Laumālie	soul or spirit
Lotu	pray, prayer, worship, religion, especially Christian religion
Mala‘e	traditional meeting ground
Mana	supernatural power
Matāpule	chief’s attendant
Mu‘a	in traditional times an attendant of a high chief, offspring of the marriage of a chief with a woman from the Matāpule class
Moheofo	principal wife of the Tu‘i Tonga, usually the daughter of the Lau, or secular ruler
Namoa	baby food
Ngingini	coconut, shrivelled inside
Tu‘a	commoner, person without chiefly rank
Tu‘i	ruler or king
Kava	traditional drink, mostly used in ceremonies, made from the dried root of the kava plant (<i>piper methysticum</i>)

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