

SISTER MALIA TU‘IFUA
DESCENDANT OF CHIEFS, DAUGHTER OF GOD

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Figure 1. Sister Malia Tu‘ifua in front of the old church in Ma‘ufanga where she took her vows in 1950. Photo by Adrienne Kaepler, 1975

At Matamoana in Lapaha, Tongatapu, on 10 September 1924, a baby girl was born to Peata Takavahalelelangi and ‘Asipeli Tu‘ifua. Though no midwife was present, Peata was unconcerned, as she had already had ten children. She called for Fau, her next-door neighbour, to cut the umbilical cord, but when Fau arrived, she realised a twin was waiting to be born. Uncertain about what to do, Fau did not want to cut the cord. Finally, ‘Asipeli cut the cord and another baby was quickly born—but this baby was considered to be dead. In an effort to revive the child, an older brother, Afekakaha, was sent for *nonu* leaves (*Morinda citrifolia*). He brought the leaves and they were heated and pressed onto the baby’s body—then gasping for air, the baby screamed. From this inauspicious beginning, this younger twin, the focus of this essay, became the revered Sister Malia Tu‘ifua (also known as Sister Augustino) (Fig. 1).

THE ELEVATED ANCESTRY OF SISTER TU'IFUA

These twins descended from the ranking genealogical lines of Tonga. Although their father, 'Asipeli, was not a landed chief himself, both 'Asipeli and Peata descended from the fourth Tu'i Kanokupolu (Mataele Ha'amea); and through the high-ranking wives of 'Asipeli's male ancestors, their genealogy included the lines of the Tu'i Tonga, the Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua, the Tu'i Kanokupolu, the Tu'i Ha'ateiho, and the priest Kautai. Because of this elevated genealogy, it was necessary that someone of high rank should give them appropriate names. Queen Sālote was asked to choose the names, as she descended from some of the same chiefs and was appropriately high ('eiki) to 'Asipeli.

Before these permanent names were bestowed, however, temporary names were given by the father's family. Ordinarily, this duty would be carried out by the family *fahu* (a sister of a brother-sister pair in the male line). 'Asipeli's father's father, Vakameilalo, had a sister 'Amelia Pāfusi, but she had married a commoner and had been removed from the position of *fahu*. As there was no appropriate sister from a brother-sister pair in 'Asipeli's line, the family had no *fahu*¹ and 'Asipeli gave the twins their temporary names—'Ana Mapa Toutai for the older twin and Malia Tupou Falemei for the younger twin (who became Sister Tu'ifua).

Permanent names were bestowed later by Queen Sālote's sons. Queen Sālote was in Tatakamotonga (the village next to Lapaha and the chiefly village of the Tungī line) resting after she had miscarried a daughter (on 6 April 1924). Her three sons came to visit and she sent them to Lapaha to bestow the names. The oldest son, the late Tupou IV, named the oldest twin Kilinganoa. The second son, Tuku'aho (who died in 1936), named the younger twin Halakihe'umata 'Road to the rainbow'. These names, chosen by Queen Sālote, recalled their common ancestors in the Ha'a Ngana line.

The twin's father, 'Asipeli Tu'ifua, was from Tatakamotonga and belonged to the Wesleyan Church. As a child, he attended 'Api Fo'ou Catholic School in Ma'ufanga with Tungī Mailefihi, who became Queen Sālote's consort, and they remained friends throughout their lives.² The twin's mother, Peata Takavahalelemoelangi, was a Catholic from Lapaha, a village traditionally Catholic since the conversion of the Tu'i Tonga line in the 1840s. When Peata and 'Asipeli married, 'Asipeli converted to Catholicism and became a catechist in Lapaha. 'Asipeli was a shopkeeper at Matamoana (a place name in Lapaha) where the family lived.

GROWING UP IN LAPAHA

The twins attended St Theresa's Convent School in Lapaha. St Theresa's was run by French Sisters, members of the order of Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (SMSM) based in Lyons, France.³ The twins made their first

communion when they were nine years old in 1934 and became boarders at the school (all the girls had to be boarders, even though they lived near to the school). Halakihe‘umata liked studying English, Tongan, mathematics and geography. She was first in her class in Forms 2, 3, 4 and 5. But, she said, she was naughty. She did not help her mother at home (although her twin did), she talked back to her parents, and she was beaten for refusing to carry water. Instead of collecting coconuts as she was supposed to do, she slept; and when she was supposed to look after her young cousins, she slept instead. She remembered saying bad words at a funeral and sticking out her tongue at Tongan soldiers as they marched past. Her school friends joined her during this latter naughtiness, and they were all punished—they stood in line to be struck by Sister Annette with a stingray tail. While all the other girls took their punishment, Halakihe‘umata ran away, only to be chastised by her mother and sisters, who noted that she deserved punishment. Ordinarily, a naughty child would be chastised by her *fahu*, however, as noted above, there was none. Because of her naughtiness, Halakihe‘umata was never the “captain” of her class, which required high grades, helpfulness to others, and the necessity to report offenders of the rules—not her “cup of tea”. Halakihe‘umata attributed her naughtiness to being spoiled by her father, who considered her a treasure that he had saved from death on the day she was born.

What Halakihe‘umata really liked was Tongan dancing and taking part in *kātoanga* ‘*ofa*, fundraising events for the Catholic church in which groups of families donated money and the convent girls provided entertainment. The day began about 10 am, when the *lali* ‘wooden drum’ (log idiophone) was beaten to gather the people. The convent girls took their places for ‘*otu haka*’ (the seated section of a *fa’ahiula*). The older girls sat in the centre (with the prefect as *vāhenga* ‘female focal performer’ placed at the middle of the line), then the younger girls were placed next to them, and finally the youngest girls sat at the ends of the semicircular rows. The day progressed with the priest preaching about one of the mysteries (*mistelio*) of the rosary. Then the girls performed while people from a particular family or group of families donated money. The amount of money donated was announced. Then the priest introduced another *mistelio*, another ‘*otu haka*’ was performed, money was counted and announced. This series of activities went on for several hours. All 15 mysteries of the rosary (five Joyful, five Sorrowful and five Glorious) were presented, so the convent girls had to know at least 15 ‘*otu haka*’.

Classes for learning *fa’ahiula* were taught by two old women, Malia Toto and Kolotile, who had learned their skills in Lapaha long before. *Fa’ahiula* were associated with the Tu‘i Tonga line from Lapaha and were passed from generation to generation. The language was not easy to understand and was considered to be a combination of ancient Tongan intermixed with other

languages. Malia Toto had been a Catholic nun, Malia Sosefo, who at one time served as Mother Superior at Kolovai Convent. She was dismissed by the Bishop because one of the girls in her care became pregnant. Apparently the girl had been raped, but as the Mother Superior was responsible for the girls, she was prohibited from wearing a nun's habit for the rest of her life and the Kolovai Convent was moved to the village of Houma. She was allowed, however, to live in the Lapaha Convent for the rest of her life. Born in the 1860s, Malia Toto learned the oldest songs and dances and passed them on to the students until her death in the 1950s. She was assisted by Kolotile, another old woman of Lapaha, who was related to the Kefu family, known for its knowledge of traditional music and dance. Later, Sister Tu'ifua used this knowledge to teach a new generation of girls at the convent.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN TONGA

The twins remained at St Theresa until the Sisters who ran the school were evacuated to New Zealand at the end of 1941. Sister Tu'ifua recalled the war years with fondness—these are her memories.⁴ American troops came in 1942—“invading” in trucks and jeeps. Tongans expected they would be bombed and taken over by the Japanese, but this did not happen. Rather, Tonga became a staging area for the American troops who were sent to the Solomon Islands and other battle areas, and eventually became a rest and recreation area for American troops. Halakihe'umata remembered that each of the royal tombs, *langi*, in Lapaha had four big tents on top. American infantrymen cleared and took over the area from Lapaha to Hoi.

Soldiers went to church and stopped to talk to the twins (now 17 years old) and other girls. They brought candies, biscuits and other good things from the canteen and shared them with the families. The Americans taught the Tongans popular songs, and the Tongans taught the Americans to speak some Tongan. In the evenings dances took place at four places in Lapaha, and the Military Police came at 10 or 11 pm. to make sure the soldiers went back to camp. At that time it was forbidden for Tongan Catholics to take part in ballroom dancing but, according to Sister Tu'ifua, “everyone danced and then went to confession on Saturday”. Women of the area earned money from washing and ironing clothes for the soldiers. The girls had many boyfriends. Halakihe'umata had three special friends: Bill Cornell and Bill Metz, who were both enlisted men, and especially Andrew (whose last name she could no longer recall), who was a Navy officer.⁵

Andrew often came in his van and took the twins and their older sister Nive for rides to areas of Tongatapu where they had never been before—some of which were very romantic. One place was 'Ana Hulu, a spectacular cave on the east coast of the island. Although such encounters were not really

acceptable for high-ranking Tongan girls, Sister Tu‘ifua looks back on them as innocent friendships which never went beyond kissing, although her older sister Nive was shocked even at a kiss. Halakihe‘umata was not too happy to find out that Andrew had two children with a half-caste girl in Nuku‘alofa!

During the occupation of Tonga by Americans and later by New Zealanders, the twins and two other girls (Tisiola Hefa and Malesela Kahola) formed a performing group. They performed *tau‘olunga* dances to Queen Sālote’s songs (see Glossary), and then invented a version of the “Lambeth Walk”, which they learned from the New Zealand soldiers. Adding two more dancers (Kalini and Ana Johansen), they formed three couples—three dressed as men in suits and three dressed in women’s evening gowns. The group performed for Tongans in various villages and was led by Sofele Kakala (a musician who later composed masses for the Catholic Church), who specialised in *fakakata* ‘funny skits’. Sofele was also the leader of the Catholic brass band. One song they played was “Hula Blues”, for which Halakihe‘umata invented a “hula” dance in which she included a back bend. The twins’ brother, Afikakaha, constructed and operated the stage curtains and their mother travelled with them to help change costumes (and, no doubt, monitor their behaviour). She was always upset when Halakihe‘umata performed the hula in her brother’s presence because of her bare legs—a taboo in brother/sister avoidance customs.

One evening the concert group performed at Mr Ledger’s Theatre in Nuku‘alofa, where Queen Sālote’s youngest son Sione Ngu (later Prince Fatafehi Tu‘i Pelehake) saw them perform the “Hoki Toki” (as the Hokey Pokey is known in Tongan). Sione Ngu told his mother about this great dance and she asked the twins to come and perform it for her. They performed in the building in the palace grounds called “Palesi” (Paris), which could be electrically lit, and the Queen watched them from outside the building.

Halakihe‘umata loved dancing, and she performed with the Lomipeau *lakalaka* group from Lapaha (see Glossary). She remembers their performance at the wharf, about 1938, to say goodbye to Fatafehi when he went overseas to continue his schooling. Fatafehi was a great friend to the twins. When in Lapaha, he would stop at their house for an evening of singing (*pō hiva*), teasing, eating watermelon and drinking ‘*otai*, a non-alcoholic fruit drink made of watermelon, mango or *vī* (*Spondias dulcis*) mixed with coconut juice. They did not drink kava as this would have suggested the possibility of a romantic relationship.

Queen Sālote composed nine Lomipeau *lakalaka* for her mother’s village of Lapaha, and Halakihe‘umata performed in five of them (“Fakatulou”, “Maile Hangaitokelau”, “Sina‘e”, “Kalauni” and “Fakamavae”). She also performed in the special *lakalaka* that Queen Sālote composed for the end

of the war combining the dancing groups of Lapaha and Tatakamotonga (Mu'a). This was a very important occasion in Tonga and the Mu'a *lakalaka* was considered to be a very special composition. It was taught by two great *lakalaka* specialists of the time, Vili Pusiaki and Malukava. On this occasion, the *vāhenga* 'female focal performer' was Fale'aka. The second-ranking position—always filled by a young female of chiefly rank—is at the end of the front row (*fakapotu*); Halakihe'umata was chosen for this position. During this *kātoanga*, celebration, Halakihe'umata also performed in a *fa'ahiula* (in both the 'otu haka and ula sections—see Glossary), presented by Lapaha dancers.

HALAKIHE'UMATA JOINS THE CONVENT

Halakihe'umata does not seem to be a perfect candidate to become a Catholic nun. Her father had been a Wesleyan, there were no priests in her family, and her older sister, Nive Tupou'ahau, had thought of becoming a nun—she was a postulant but left after two years because of sickness.⁶ Halakihe'umata would be one of the highest ranking Tongans ever to join the sisterhood of the Society of Mary—a community of nuns dedicated to obedience, chastity and poverty. She descended not only from the old pagan chiefs and priests, but also from relationships that in the 20th century were considered incestuous. However, none of this is relevant when a woman decides to dedicate herself to God; what is relevant are her actions after she takes her vows.

Sister Tu'ifua traced her becoming a nun to a vow she made in 1946. She was on a boat travelling from Tongatapu to Vava'u to attend a funeral. It was the first time that she was on a large boat; the sea was rough and she was terrified. She vowed to God that if she arrived in Vava'u safely, she would dedicate her life to becoming a nun. On arriving in Vava'u, she went to the convent and told the Mother Superior her vow. Then she tried to forget her promise.

In 1947 while attending a concert in Lapaha, the Mother Superior reminded her of her vow and Halakihe'umata was persuaded to join the new group of postulants. She did not tell her parents of this decision, and on the day before she was to enter the convent she was asleep at home. Her mother went that day to the dispensary for medicine and Sister Messetta remarked about Halakihe'umata's entering the convent. On the same day the bishop told her father that one of the twins was going to enter the convent. When they arrived home, Halakihe'umata, still in bed, heard her father, mother and brother Afikakaha discussing it, and during the evening meal she finally told her family of her decision. Her father was not happy about it and the next day he said to her, "I always tried to give you everything, the convent cannot do that. You will steal something and shame all of us." But her mother told her not to worry, he just did not want any of his children to leave home. Her family thought that she would soon tire of such regimentation and would drop

out. Eventually ‘Asipeli got used to the idea of his daughter becoming a nun and went to visit her in the convent during their one-day-a-month visitation days. Once he even brought her perfume, which was not allowed. She gave it to Mother Superior (Mother Edith from France).

There were five in Halakihe‘umata’s 1947 postulant class at Ma‘ufanga Convent; one dropped out after the first year. The postulants were taught by the Ma‘ufanga Convent Community, including the Marist fathers and brothers, the SMSM sisters, and Sister Priscilla from America. They studied the Bible, meditated and worked—including washing the clothes of the fathers and sisters. They also did mending and ironing, helped clean the grounds and dormitory and taught the boarding girls how to do this work. The girls did not mind helping Halakihe‘umata because she always entertained them by telling them stories. The next year she entered the novitiate, copying meditations and other religious literature and did more Bible study. The priests came twice a week to teach and explain how to live in a congregation, the sayings of Ignatius and Catholic doctrine. During this time Halakihe‘umata also learned how to teach by studying the books put out by the Tongan Government. She passed all of her exams, including Grade I Certificate, equivalent to a university entrance exam.

Each year Halakihe‘umata made vows of poverty, chastity and obedience—for that year. One day she remembered very well: her cousin had a child and asked Halakihe‘umata to name it. It was 1947 and the day of the double wedding of the Queen’s two sons—her old friends. She named the child ‘Unalotokifangatapu⁷ to acknowledge her longing to be taking part in the dancing in honour of the two princes, but instead she was stuck in the convent. Her profession day was in 1950, when she made her vows at the altar in old Ma‘ufanga Church to the famous Bishop Blanc.⁸

Now her vows were for poverty, chastity and obedience for life—*fua kava ki he mate*. Halakihe‘umata chose her new name, Sister Augustino, naming herself for St Augustine, whom she felt had overcome his sins and might help her do the same. Four Tongan women were professed that day (Fig. 2). A feast celebrated the occasion, but their food was divided and sent to their family homes. The new sisters stayed at the convent and waited for their assignments.

Sister Augustino was placed at Sacred Heart Convent at Neiafu, Vava‘u, from 1950 to 1952. She taught in the primary school, teaching every subject to boys and girls. The sisters’ habits at the time were black and heavy—including underwear and a long-sleeved slip that reached to the knees, a corset-like linen pleated skirt with a top, a round cape that met in the front, and an apron-like layer with a pinafore (Fig. 3). Sister Augustino and other nuns often became sick from wearing these heavy black clothes in the heat,⁹ and in 1952 the



Figure 2. Profession day for four new Tongan Sisters: from left, Sister Julian Santos (who worked with Aboriginal peoples in Australia), Sister Augustino (now Sister Tu'ifua), Sister Kapeliele (later Sister Gabriel) and Sister Iasinito (later Sister Hyacinth). Photo courtesy of Sister Malia Tu'ifua.

habits were changed to lighter-weight cloth in white or blue—"the colour of our lady". From 1953 to 1955, she taught in Houma, and there followed teaching assignments in Nuku'alofa, Ma'ufanga and Ha'apai. In 1964 she was a delegate to the Pan Pacific and South East Asian Women's Association (PPSEAWA) held in Tonga on the invitation of Queen Sālote. Then she was sent back again to Ma'ufanga until 1968.

I was privileged to meet this remarkable woman during the late 1960s, when I was invited to Ma'ufanga Convent to give the teachers some background on the migration of peoples into the Pacific Islands. We became fast friends, and she helped me immeasurably for more than 30 years. She instructed me in Tongan dancing, especially in the old *fa'ahiula* of long ago. She taught me about Tongan social structure and kinship, using her own family background as examples. She related stories of times past and the importance of poetry, music and dance in Tongan life. She took me to visit the old (and young) women working on barkcloth, mats and baskets. And she was especially helpful in helping me with translations of Tongan dance poetry.



Figure 3. Sister Augustino in her heavy black habit, 1950. Photo courtesy of Sister Malia Tu'ifua.

In 1968, Sister Augustino was sent to the island of 'Eua where she was head teacher at Sacred Heart Primary School and Sister Superior at Assumption Convent until 1971, when she was sent again to Vava'u until 1973. By this time, she had taught in nearly every Catholic area in Tonga for more than 23 years.

In 1973, she was sent to Australia for six months. In Melbourne, she continued her religious studies and then went to Sydney, where she helped to close a convent that was no longer needed and was instrumental in sending all the unneeded things to Tonga. She credited this trip to Australia to helping her accept things as they are. Before this, she sometimes found difficulty in living with people of different nationalities with different customs. If she did not like something or felt something was not right, she spoke out straight and told them so. After her sojourn in Australia, however, if she did not like something

she accepted it as a cross to be borne and a way to gain strength. This became habitual, and from that time on she felt that she could accept anything.

Next she went to Auckland, New Zealand, studying church history. She felt, however, that this was a waste of time and in 1974 went back to Ma'ufanga, where she embarked on what she considers her most important work. In the meantime, the Second Vatican Council had given nuns permission to dress less strictly and to resume a family name if they wished. Sister Augustino took her father's surname and became Sister Malia Tu'ifua; she chose to continue wearing the bonnet (Fig. 1).

SISTER TU'IFUA BEGINS WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT WORK

Understanding the difficulties in the lives of poor Tongan women, Sister Tu'ifua began development work with the women of Ma'ufanga. Many houses were very poor and lacked simple hygiene. In addition to a lack of money for school fees, children were not well fed and were improperly looked after. Some women were battered, and they had poor clothing. Sister Tu'ifua went from house to house—not just Catholic houses—and organised the women into groups with a chairperson and secretary. Meetings were held each Sunday and the women discussed how to improve the quality of their lives. Each woman paid 10 pence each Sunday, and individuals could borrow money for one week to be paid back with interest. When one group was organised, Sister Tu'ifua moved to the next street and organised another group of women. Finally, five big groups were organised in Ma'ufanga. She then moved on to the next village and then the next.

Eventually the Federation of Peoples of the South Pacific (FSP) from America heard about Sister Tu'ifua's grass-roots work with Tongan women. They gave her funds to assist in development work, which Sister Tu'ifua extended to include the sale of Tongan handicrafts at the Toutaimana Catholic compound, in a handicraft shop at the Basilica in Nuku'alofa, and at markets set up for visiting tourist ships. She then started a housing project and obtained funds to help needy families with the construction of cement water-tanks and kitchens, with renovation of their houses and even building small houses, and also filling in swampy areas around their homes. Funds were also provided towards purchasing furniture, fencing, cooking utensils, dishes, silverware, washing facilities and water buckets. She encouraged each family to have its own things, making it unnecessary to borrow from neighbours. She also encouraged the women to join *kautaha* 'work groups', for making mats and barkcloth needed for Tongan obligations, especially funerals and weddings. Her skill was teaching by example, with humour, and always with praise. FSP continued to help with funds until 1990. During this time her assignment was to work with the "poorest of the poor", and she had additional funds from UNDP

(United Nations Development Program), CCJD (a programme sponsored by Pacific Catholics) and Miserrior (a program sponsored by German Catholics).

Sister Tu'ifua was especially proud of building houses for some of the poorest people of Tonga. For a housing project funded by CCJD and Miserrior they built 114 houses for TP\$41,106.16. The houses were 6 x 4.2 metres or 10 x 7.2 metres. Suitable trees were cut from the plantations of the family that would own the house and taken to the sawmill—making considerable saving on the timber costs. The grant funds paid for the floors and iron roofing materials (Fig. 4). With funds from USAid and CCJD, community halls were built in Veitongo, Lapaha and Ha'alalo, and she also received funds to repair homes after cyclones.

In her efforts to help Tongan women improve the quality of their lives, Sister Tu'ifua organised *'a'ahi*, inspections of houses and their furnishings, including Tongan mats and barkcloth. These inspections started in 1974 and have continued. Three or four Tongan sisters would inspect the houses to see if they were clean, painted and in good repair. Prizes of household objects were given, and women were anxious to show off their houses and



Figure 4. A new house in Pea, built as part of Sister Tu'ifua's project of building houses for some of the poorest people of Tonga. Photo courtesy of Sister Malia Tu'ifua.



Figure 5. Women show their household possessions prepared for an *'a'ahi* in 'Eua. Photo courtesy of Sister Malia Tu'ifua.

possessions (Fig. 5). This practice encouraged women not to waste their time, but to keep their family well and their house and its furnishings in good repair. Sometimes women organised *'a'ahi* in each other's villages. For example, the women of Houma would visit and inspect the homes of the women in Vaini, and then the women of Vaini would visit and inspect the homes of the women in Houma. Reciprocal visits were arranged between five other pairs of villages. The women enjoyed seeing each other's houses and things and considered such visits as true *kātoanga* 'festive occasions'.

SISTER TU'IFUA IN AN INTERNATIONAL ROLE

Because Sister Tu'ifua was the first Tongan woman to organise and work on development projects from the grass roots, she travelled widely in Tonga and to international meetings. She attended conferences in Fiji, Hawai'i, Canberra, Los Angeles, New Delhi, Africa, Tahiti, Rarotonga and Bangkok. In 1992, she went to the Vatican for a four-month renewal and afterward she visited Lyons, France, home of the founding Sisters of the Society of Mary. The founder of this order was a widow who dedicated her life to looking after the poor. Others joined her and they established a religious order that eventually sent

sisters as missionaries to various islands in the Pacific. Visiting the place of origin of her religious order was very important to Sister Tu‘ifua.

In 1992, Sister Tu‘ifua was back again in Ma‘ufanga working with the poorest women, and then she was again sent to ‘Eua from 1993 until 1996. From 1996, she was again at the Convent in Ma‘ufanga, continuing her work with the poor, and urging Tongans to eat more nutritious food to improve their health.

During her work with women, Sister Tu‘ifua learned from them about traditional medicine. When she visited the villages, she learned that certain women were known for certain medicines (*faito‘o*). Ordinarily, when one wanted to learn medicinal secrets, one had to take gifts of kava, mats and barkcloth to the *faito‘o* (meaning here ‘the person who knows the medicine’). Some *faito‘o* shared their knowledge with Sister Tu‘ifua and gave her permission to share this knowledge with others. She presented some of her work at a conference on traditional medicine in New Delhi (Fig. 6).

Sister Tu‘ifua became head of the Diocese Villages Women’s Development Organization, she was involved in the organisation of the World Day of Prayer, and she had projects with the Catholic Women’s League. Amidst all these activities, she continued to raise money for cement water-tanks, write funding proposals, sell mats and barkcloth for women, and provide encouragement and support for an organisation of “Women of Tonga Against Casinos”.



Figure 6. Sister Tu‘ifua at an international conference in New Delhi, India. Photo courtesy of Sister Malia Tu‘ifua.

Sister Tu'ifua felt that her most important work was in helping women of Tonga improve their lives. Her motto was: "Happy mothers make happy families, happy families make happy villages, and happy villages make for a happy country." Indeed, she did improve the lives of countless Tongan women, and gave years of her life to help make Tonga that happy country. Sister Tu'ifua passed away on 12 February 2007.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR TONGAN DANCES

- Tau'olunga*: A female standing dance performed to string-band music
Lakalaka: A large group dance performed by men and women to sung poetry
Fa'ahiula: A historic dance genre performed by women and/or girls to sung poetry, with 'otu haka (sitting) and ula (standing) sections

NOTES

1. When there is no *fahu* information may be lost. For example, in 'Asipeli's possession was an old and ragged fine mat (*kie*), known as "Kie Monumonuka" (*kie* that has been wounded). It was worn only for very special feasts and other occasions. Halakihe'umata's brother wore it for his wedding, and Halakihe'umata wore it at several feasts when she was a young woman. 'Amelia Pāfusi, the sister of Vakameilalo ('Asipeli's father's father), would have inherited the right to look after the *kie* and their histories. However, after she married a commoner and was excluded from being the family *fahu*, the specific history of this *kie* was lost, except that it came from 'Asipeli's grandfather's mother. 'Asipeli inherited the *kie* because he was the oldest of five brothers and his sisters died young (Kaepler 1999: 185).
2. They were also distant cousins.

3. The Society of Mary is a branch of the Marist Missionary Sisters, begun by a laywoman, Francoise Perroton, in Lyons, France, under Father Jean-Claude Colin in 1843. Francoise served in 'Uvea and Futuna. In 1881 Bishop Elloy brought three "holy ladies" to Ma'ufanga where they began a school (O'Brien 1989: 74). Before Sister Tu'ifua and her three co-postulants, there were 15 Tongan Sisters who professed and kept their vows until death.
4. For further information on the Second World War in Tonga, see Scarr, Gunson and Terrell 1998.
5. Halakihe'umata did not stay in contact with the American servicemen after the war.
6. The daughter of Halakihe'umata's sister Fonuku also became a nun—Sister Malia Sanele, who was assigned to the Solomon Islands.
7. 'Unaloto = "to cherish an affectionate desire or longing" (Churchward 1959: 572); *ki* = to; *fangatapu* = the area in front of the palace where the marriage ceremony took place. Tu'ifua had a first cousin named 'Unaloto, and bestowed it to express her own ambiguous feelings.
8. Joseph Blanc (1871-1962), of Toulon, France, was ordained in 1895 and became titular Bishop of Dibon (*évêque titulaire de Dibon*). He was the fifth Tongan Vicar Apostolic, serving in this capacity from 1912 to 1937. He was editor of the Catholic newspaper *Taumu'a Lelei* and author of a history of Tonga (Blanc 1934; see also Wood-Ellem 1999: 308 and Duriez-Toutain 1995: 201).
9. Sister Augustino suffered from tuberculosis. She had a spot on her lung, had an operation, and spent nearly a year in Vaiola Hospital in Nuku'alofa; in 1999 she spent another three months in Viola Hospital.

ABSTRACT

This portrait of Sister Tu'ifua (1924-2007), explores the life of high-ranking Halakihe'umata Tu'ifua from her inauspicious birth in Lapaha, Tonga, to her profession in becoming a Roman Catholic nun and her subsequent work for the church. The account details several features of her early life: her love of dancing and performing, her interaction with American servicemen during the Second World War, and her reason for becoming a nun. It then follows Sister Tu'ifua's career: teaching children, development work with Tongan women and, latterly, her international role and work for the betterment of the poorest of Tongan people.

Keywords: Tonga, Marist sisters, Second World War, women's development, dance

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