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EXTRAORDINARY POLYNESIAN WOMEN: WRITING THEIR STORIES

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EXTRAORDINARY POLYNESIAN WOMEN: WRITING THEIR STORIES

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Helene Connor is of Māori, Irish and English descent. She has *whakapapa* (genealogy) links to Te Atiawa and Ngāti Ruanui *iwi* (tribes) and Ngāti Rahiri and Ngāti Te Whiti *hapū* (sub-tribes). Helene is a Senior Lecturer and Programme Director for the Social Practice Postgraduate Programmes in the Department of Social Practice, Unitec, New Zealand. Her research interests are in developing feminist theoretical perspectives and research methodologies to research issues of relevance and interest to *wahine* Māori; the exploration of constructions of Māori and multi-ethnic identity; the intersections between gender and ethnicity, and aspects of gender and cultural representation; life histories, personal narratives and auto/biographical research.

Phyllis Herda is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland. She gained an MA degree in Anthropology at the University of Auckland and completed a PhD in Pacific History at the Australian National University. She continues to research and write on Tongan ethnography and history; gender, disease and colonialism in Polynesia; and is engaged in research writing on Polynesian textiles, ancient and modern.

Judith Huntsman became Hon. Professorial Research Fellow in Anthropology at the University of Auckland upon her retirement in 2001, and continued as Hon. Editor of the Polynesian Society. She conducted field research in the Tokelau atolls between 1967 and 1997 and has had varied and continuing relationships with Tokelau people resident in New Zealand since the early 1970s. As well as numerous chapters and articles, she has been an author of several books about Tokelau's history and ethnography, recent history and current affairs, migration and health, and narrative and song. Many of these works have been written in collaboration with other scholars, especially Antony Hooper, her long-time colleague in Tokelau studies.

Carol Ivory is an art historian (PhD, University of Washington) and retired from Washington State University as Professor Emerita of Fine Arts. Carol's research focuses on the art, history and culture of the Marquesas Islands. In addition to publishing numerous articles, she has been a co-curator or consultant for several exhibitions on the Marquesas and French Polynesia at venues including Mission Houses Museum, Honolulu, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Seattle Art Museum. She served as President of the Pacific Arts Association, and is currently curating an exhibition on Marquesan art and culture planned for 2016 at the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris. She continues her research in the Marquesas, especially on Vaekehu and her family.

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INTRODUCTION: WRITING THE LIVES OF SOME EXTRAORDINARY POLYNESIAN WOMEN

PHYLLIS S. HERDA
University of Auckland

Conversations in the 1990s between the late Elizabeth Wood Ellem and myself about the portrayal of Pacific Island women in historical texts led us to contact a number of scholars, some of whose writings have resulted in this "special issue" on the lives of some extraordinary Polynesian women.

Those long ago conversations were prompted in particular by two volumes published in the 1970s and edited by historians at the Australian National University: *Pacific Island Portraits* (Davidson and Scarr 1970) and *More Pacific Island Portraits* (Scarr 1978). The 25 chapters in these two collections were equally balanced between indigenous and European subjects—including portraits of 24 significant individuals in the post-contact history of Oceania—but not a single woman. While the omission of women did not seem particularly notable in the 1970s, some 20 years later it was remarkable. In addition the inclusion of Europeans is representative of the approach often adopted at the time the volumes were produced. Elizabeth and I felt that a book focused on Pacific Island women was long overdue. In considering such a collection in light of our own research on Tongan historical women (Herda 1987 and Wood Ellem 1999), we decided that a geographical focus on Polynesia, rather than the wider Pacific, would both be more manageable and give greater coherence to the volume.

Our intention was to represent a variety of notable women from Polynesia's past; not necessarily just those who rose to prominence through high birth rank. With this in mind, scholars with expertise in Polynesian studies and a concomitant interest in gender were approached about contributing to the volume. There was strong support for the project and each author selected the woman, or in some cases women, whose portrait they would create.

Traditional historical research into the lives and experiences of Polynesian women has been problematic owing to the absence or minimisation of women in the historical record. Early visiting Europeans, be they explorers, beachcombers, whalers or traders, were almost exclusively male. They expected to deal with male leaders and sought out contact with indigenous men. If contact was made with women, especially non-chiefly women, it was almost always sexual in nature. The journals and memoirs of these visitors reflect this androcentric bias. For example, the French expedition under the command of Bruni d'Entrecasteuax (Labillardiere 1800) which visited

Tongatapu in 1793, met an influential woman whom they called "Queen Tineh" (probably Tu'i Tonga Fefine Nanasipau'u). Although they mention in passing her exalted rank and her undoubted authority, their substantive entries markedly focus on the exploits of male chiefs. While there are several named portrait sketches of Tongan men from the voyage, the only woman whose portrait was sketched is simply identified as "Woman of the Friendly Islands" in a coquettish pose suggesting sexual availability (Labillardiere 1800: 392). Similarly, male Christian missionaries, ardent chroniclers of Polynesia in the late 18th and 19th centuries, generally ignored the activities of non-chiefly women and censured the behaviour of politically active women of high birth rank as unfeminine or improper. The resulting archival records of Polynesia substantially focus on men and their activities as if they represented the entirety of society. Histories based on these sources consequently ignored or minimised the roles of women and more often than not misunderstood indigenous gender concepts. Women, if represented at all, were portrayed as sexual objects or as inept or unseemly rulers.

Elizabeth and I received a number of manuscripts detailing the lives of notable women, but changing circumstances and new research projects took both of us away from completing the volume at that time and it seemed that it would remain in limbo. However, recently Judith Huntsman, an editor of the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, approached me about publishing some of the portraits as a special issue of the *Journal*. This seemed an excellent way to resurrect the project and to have at least some of the portraits in print and online. Judith and I read through the material and selected portraits which were both diverse and would make a cohesive *Journal* issue. The authors welcomed the chance, not just to bring their subject's life to an interested reading public, but also to consider how academia had changed from the project's inception.

Life and oral history and biographical narratives have proved to be a popular genre of both academic and general historical writing. They allow the voice of the subject to be heard in an individual and intimate interpretation of the past. They articulate conceptualisations of personhood or, in the case of this volume, womanhood and how that notion of womanhood is lived through diverse experiences and turning points in an individual's life. The narrative of a life also highlights significant relationships as it chronicles the passing of time and therefore also speaks about indigenous gender relations and how they transformed under colonialism. Oral and biographical research can also help to overcome the androcentric bias of surviving written archives.

The academic study of gender and the position of women in Polynesian society and history through biography have grown in prominence since the late 1970s and early 1980s. Biographical accounts of Māori women were

published in Aotearoa/New Zealand early in that period. For example, the autobiography of Amiria Stirling (Stirling 1976), facilitated by Anne Salmond, related the life of a notable Māori woman. Similarly, Judith Binney and Gillian Chaplin (1986) employed oral history methods to research the lives of Māori women who were followers of Te Kooti and the Ringatu faith. The importance of genealogy (*whakapapa*) in the women's lives and Māori belief emerges as a central theme of the monograph.

The lives of several historically significant women in Island Polynesia were brought to scholarly attention when Caroline Ralston and Nicholas Thomas organised a session on gender in Polynesian history at the 1985 conference of the Pacific History Association held in Suva, Fiji. The five contributions considered women of high birth rank from several island groups and these were published in 1987 in two issues of the *Journal of Pacific History*. Two years later an influential collection of essays focused on family, gender and colonialism in the Pacific was published. Many of the chapters in that volume, edited by Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (1989), were concerned with individual Pacific women.

The 1990s saw continued interest in studies of gender and the position of women in Polynesian history and society. High rank and political prominence were not necessary characteristics for a life to be considered worthy of being chronicled. Jocelyn Linnekin (1990), for example, portrayed the lives of non-chiefly or commoner Hawaiian women *and* men in the 18th and 19th centuries through the creative use of claimants' statements to the Land Commission, informed by a consideration of the rich Hawaiian ethnohistorical literature. Caroline Ralston's overview (1992a) examined how women in Polynesia and the larger Pacific region have been represented in history. Elizabeth Wood Ellem's (1999) biography of Queen Sālote of Tonga considered the life of this beloved monarch, through personal experiences and public events, in the 20th century history of Tonga. Māori and Island Polynesian women have also been included in collections of biographical sketches of women in Aotearoa/New Zealand such as *The Book of New Zealand Women* (Macdonald, Penfold and Williams 1991), *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (1990-2000), and Lyndon Fraser and Katie Pickles' collection of essays (2002) on women and migration in New Zealand history.

Biographies and life histories of Polynesian women for a more general readership also appeared at this time. Lynnsay Rongokea's (1992, 2001) volumes on Cook Island quilts (*tivaevae*) included biographical sketches and photographic portraits gathered from interviews with the quilt-makers. The resulting publications present the life stories of Cook Island women accompanied by photographs of the women with their *tivaevae*. Peggy

Fairbairn-Dunlop (1996) edited a collection of informal life histories of Samoan women both in the islands and abroad. The life of Tupou Posesi Fanua of Tonga was published by Lois Webster (Fanua 1996). Her life history was based on taped oral history interviews.

The portraits presented here offer the life stories of eight women through six essays. A collated bibliography of references from all the essays is presented at the end of the collected chapters. We begin with two 19th century queens of chiefly rank, who were politically powerful. Vaekehu, portrayed by Carol Ivory, was a high ranking woman born in the Marquesas in 1823. She grew up at a time when many of the traditional Marquesan ways were still practised and experienced dramatic impacts on them during her lifetime. By the time of her death in 1901 Vaekehu had converted to Catholicism and indeed became a devout and pious member of the church. ʻAimata Pomare IV, portrayed by Karen Stevenson, lived in Tahiti at a time of major cultural, political, religious and social changes. She ascended the throne in 1827 and reigned for 50 years until 1877. Born before Tahiti became Christian or French, ʻAimata Pomare IV learned to negotiate, ultimately not successfully, both indigenous rivalries and competing foreign interests intent on colonial rule.

The Coe sisters Emma, later known as Queen Emma, and Phebe, known in New Guinea as “Miti”, are portrayed by Damon Salesa. They bridge the 19th and 20th centuries. The sisters were born to a Samoan mother and an American father, and raised in Samoa in the latter half of the 19th century. Through advantageous marriages and astute business acumen the women attained fame and notoriety as they created a trading and planting empire in northern New Guinea during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a time of tremendous upheavals in the colony.

All four of the women from the 20th century were, coincidentally, born in 1924 and all were revered for their service to their communities. Sister Tuʻifua, portrayed by Adrienne Kaeppler, a Tongan Catholic nun of the Sisters of the Society of Mary, laboured assiduously to improve the quality of life of poor Tongan women through employment, housing, education, health and traditional medicine. Kula, portrayed by Judith Huntsman, was born on the atoll of Fakaofo and became Tokelau’s first qualified nurse. She worked tirelessly to promote healthcare throughout the atolls and was known as a woman of great skill and enormous compassion who delivered countless healthy babies and provided much needed medical attention during her career. Nua, also portrayed by Judith Huntsman, was born on the Tokelau atoll of Atafu. She spent her early life in the atoll with her grandparents and then was sent to school in Samoa where her father worked. Nua qualified as a teacher and was a pioneer in establishing the modern education system in Tokelau. Whāea Betty Wark, portrayed by Helene Connor, was born in the Hokianga,

Aotearoa/New Zealand. “Ma Betty”, as she was affectionately known, was a much loved and respected community worker. Her work among homeless children and young adults in central Auckland from the 1970s lead her to establish the Arohanui Trust to provide for those living in poverty. All four of these women were well known by their biographers who had spent many hours talking with them.

Much has changed in Polynesia and the wider Pacific during the lives of the women portrayed in these essays and this is reflected in how each of the portraits was researched and written. Ivory and Stevenson are both art historians. They worked with surviving documentary material to uncover and appreciate the lives of Vaekehu and ‘Aimata. That both were high-ranking, powerful women is no accident. Early European chroniclers of the Pacific focused on women of rank whom they often identified as “queens”. This, of course, reflected their understanding of what kind of women held positions of authority in their own society, as well as indicating who was considered notable or extraordinary in 19th century Polynesia.

The authors of the 20th century portraits employed different methodologies in researching their subjects. Kaeppler and Huntsman are both cultural/social anthropologists who met Sister Tu‘ifua (Kaeppler), Kula and Nua (Huntsman) while undertaking fieldwork in Tonga and Tokelau respectively. Both knew their subjects well and had a deep understanding of the women’s cultures before writing their biographical sketches. This understanding enabled them to position each woman’s achievements in the context of the time and societies in which they lived. In addition the egalitarian nature of Tokelauan society provides a contrast to the marked hierarchy of the other represented island groups. Connor’s academic degree is in Women’s Studies and she brings that discipline’s approach of presenting a woman’s life in her own words to her portrait of Betty Wark, who had sought out a biographer to chronicle her life. Connor met and grew to know Betty well through the biographical process. These women of the 20th century were deemed remarkable and extraordinary because of the service they brought to local communities rather than the circumstances of their birth.

Salesa, a historian, bridges the 19th and 20th centuries in his portraits of Emma and Phebe (Miti) Coe. This bridging was not just in the dates of women’s lives, but also in terms of how their lives were appraised and recorded. Queen Emma, as she was known, emphasised her American heritage, through her father, when negotiating her marriages and position within society. However, her notoriety, during her lifetime and as chronicled by her biographers (Banas 1988, Dutton 1976, Grove-Day 1969, Robson 1965) relied heavily on a romantic construction of a sexualised, exotic Polynesian woman. Her sister, Miti, by contrast, identified with her Samoan

side through her mother's ancestry. She was recognised as having a keen intellect and an exceptional understanding of local New Guinean customs and language. Miti's biographers Mead (1960) and Overell (1923), unlike Emma's, knew her well. Mead also corresponded extensively with Miti and both biographers sought to contextualise Miti's life within her community.

Our primary goal in assembling these portraits has been to highlight the lives and experiences of Polynesian women in history who have not always been included in the historical record and to create an understanding of wider social history as expressed through the lives of prominent women. Each portrait adopts an intimate focus on the life of its subject. Although in different times and archipelagos all of the portraits demonstrate the importance of family, ancestry, church and community to the women's lives as well as the major political, religious and social transformations which occurred as European colonialism and Christianity came to the region. In addition many of the women's experiences embrace issues of modernity such as advanced education, employment, migration and transnationalism. All of the authors have an intimate knowledge of indigenous history, society and culture which underpins their depiction of their subjects. In addition, all are passionate about the islands they work in and the people who inhabit those islands. The result is a rich and accessible collection of biographical sketches of extraordinary Polynesian women.

ABSTRACT

This "special issue" on the lives of some extraordinary Polynesian women considers biographical narrative as a means of highlighting the lives and experiences of Polynesian women in history and creating an understanding of wider social history. Traditional historical research into the lives and experiences of Polynesia usually ignored or minimised women in the historical record. Indigenous gender concepts were usually misunderstood and women, if represented at all, were portrayed as sexual objects or as inept or unseemly rulers. Allowing the voice of the subject to be heard, instead, permits an individual and intimate as well as culturally rich interpretation of the past.

Keywords: women, gender, life history, biography

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VAEKEHU, THE LIFE OF A 19TH CENTURY MARQUESAN "QUEEN" IN TURBULENT TIMES

CAROL S. IVORY
Washington State University

Figure 1. Vaekehu, Queen of the Marquesas. Neg. no. 121424. Photographer, Alfred G. Mayer, 1899. Courtesy Department Library Services, American Museum of Natural History.

There is perhaps no other Marquesan, woman or man, whose life more clearly mirrors the changes that occurred in the Marquesas Islands in the 19th century than Vaekehu (Fig. 1). Her story contains adventure and irony, violence and betrayal, dignity and courage. In its broad sweep and intimate detail, it brings to life and makes personal, abstract notions of power and status, gender relations, culture contact and historical change.

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Vaekehu was born on the island of Nuku Hiva (Fig. 2) around 1823, a high-ranking woman in a line of powerful and wealthy Marquesan women. She grew up in a period when many of the old ways were still vital and the structure of “traditional” Marquesan life remained intact. In her youth, she was extensively and exquisitely tattooed. She saw the arrival of missionaries, first Protestant in 1829, then Catholic a decade later, and the accession of the archipelago by the French in 1842. In the last half of the century, she watched her people die and her culture collapse around her. Strong-willed and courageous, Vaekehu became taciturn and withdrawn in her later years. She found peace in the religion of the Catholic missionaries, and became the stalwart supporter of the Catholic Church and the French government that, in her lifetime, subdued her people and transformed their way of life forever. By the time of her death in June 1901, at the age of 78, fewer than 4000 Marquesans remained of the estimated 100,000 a century earlier.[1]

Vaekehu’s story begins with the complex genealogical interrelationships between her family and that of her husband, Temoana, which established their high-ranking status in Marquesan society. This status prompted the French to designate them “king” and “queen” of Nuku Hiva.[2] The story continues with the chronicle of their often tumultuous years together as husband and wife. Finally, it follows the nearly 40 years after her husband’s death, when Vaekehu lived as matriarch and titular monarch of an increasingly desolate Nuku Hiva. While numerous events in Vaekehu’s later life are well-documented, the information about the earlier part is elusive, much like the personality that emerges in the anecdotes of the many missionaries, government officials and itinerant visitors to the islands who met and wrote about her.

GENDER, RANK AND GENEALOGY: A CASE HISTORY

One’s genealogy is critical in establishing one’s place in Polynesian societies, including the Marquesas Islands. The marriage of Vaekehu and Temoana was significant because it brought together bloodlines from many, if not all, of the major tribes and sub-tribes on Nuku Hiva, ensuring peace on the island.[3] They were second cousins who shared a famous great-grandfather, Kiatonui, and great-grandmother, Tahiatai‘oa.[4]

One of the lessons that research into the life of Vaekehu substantiates is that, in the Marquesas, women could, and often did, inherit and hold both property and titles, and wield great influence.[5] Such was the case with Kiatonui’s mother, Putahai‘i, who though not first-born, was a powerful and wealthy woman in her own right. Edward Robarts, a beachcomber who lived in the Marquesas between 1797 and 1806, described Putahai‘i’s power: “… the favour of the old lady was worth the favour of the Whole family. Her word was a law. They

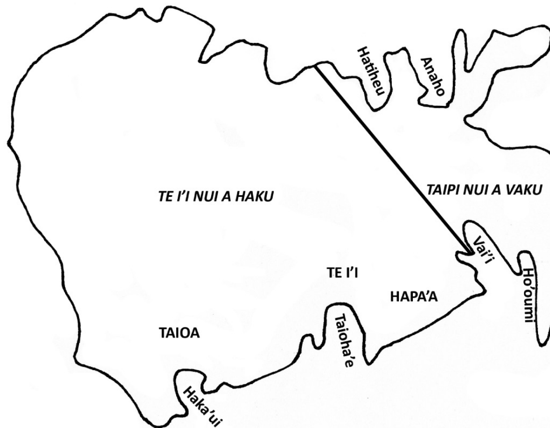

Figure 2. Map of Nuku Hiva. Valleys and bays; TRIBES.

even did not go to war without her consent. She was a woman of sound reason, her intelects [sic] Keen, and firm in her resolutions" (1974: 148).

Kiatonui, her son, was high chief of the powerful Te Iʻi tribe. As the result of his parents' marriage and his position as their first-born, Kiatonui brought together four of the six valleys of Taiohaʻe Bay (Pakiu, Haʻavao, Hoata and Meau).[6] Once sustained European contact began in the early 19th century, this Bay became the political and commercial capital of the northern Marquesas. Kiatonui was the highest-ranking chief in Taiohaʻe when the Russian expedition under Capt. Adam von Krusenstern visited in 1804 and the Americans, under Captain David Porter, arrived in 1813.

Kiatonui married Tahiataiʻoa, a highly ranked and powerful woman from a second important Nuku Hiva tribe, and Te Iʻi ally, the Taiʻoa of Hakaʻui, a valley to the west of Taiohaʻe. Their granddaughter, named Paetini, was born around 1798. She was the first-born daughter of a first-born daughter of a first-born son of a powerful mother and as a result, held chiefly rank in the Taiohaʻe, Hakaʻui and Hapaʻa valleys. She was a favourite of her great-grandmother Putahaiʻi, had her own house that was *tapu* to all but her family, and her own personal guardian, Putahaiʻi's youngest and favourite son. Paetini became famous when she met the American naval captain, David Porter, in 1813, and the members of the Dumont d'Urville expedition in 1838. She was, according to Porter (1822 vol. II: 20), "held in great estimation, on account of her rank and beauty".

Paetini's primary husband was the high chief of the Ho'oumi, one of several allied Taipi tribes that lived in the large bay to the east of Taioha'e.[7] As did the Te I'i, they included numerous sub-groups, and their influence extended over the entire eastern third of the island, including Hatiheu and Anaho valleys. They had a reputation as fierce warriors and were bitter enemies of the Te I'i. In the Marquesan custom, Paetini also had numerous *vahana pekio* 'secondary husbands', and perhaps a relationship with Porter, as well.[8] Père Mathias Gracia (1843: 102-3) cited her as an example of a woman with title and power (here and elsewhere, translations from the French by the author):

> She was the only heir of numerous districts and she had for principal spouse the chief or king of Oumis [Ho'oumi], distant by some miles, and who came to see her only every two or three months; but she had around her usually two or three other small chiefs, also called her spouses.... This queen was daughter, mother of kings and related to the majority of chiefs of the islands and the bays.

Paetini and her Ho'oumi husband had at least two daughters: Apekua, the elder, and Vaekehu, the younger. As a result of their genealogy, just described, these two daughters were highly ranked in the Taipi-Ho'oumi, Hapa'a, Tai'oa and Te I'i tribes. Each, in turn, married Temoana.

Temoana was also highly ranked and also traced his lineage back to Kiatonui and Tahiatai'oa. Charles Stewart, who visited Taioha'e in 1829 when Temoana was about eight, wrote: "All the tribes, including the Taipis, partially at least acknowledge the boy [Temoana]—whose maternal grandmother is a chief woman of that tribe, still living at their principal valley—as the rightful prince of the whole [island] (1831: 303)."[9]

MARRIED LIFE WITH TEMOANA

Marriages among high-ranking Marquesans were often arranged and served to establish or strengthen alliances between families or tribes. The marriage ceremony could take place when the husband and wife were young children, or even infants. Temoana's first marriage took place on 19 September 1833, when he was around 12 years old. It is recorded in detail in the journals of two missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions who witnessed the ceremony. The unnamed bride is described by the missionary, W.P. Alexander (1833), as being a "high chief among the Hapas [Hapa'a]" who was "2 or 3 years older" than Temoana (see also Armstrong 1833-34: 32).

Temoana left the Marquesas in 1834, shortly after this ceremony, and travelled on whaling ships to England and back. Robert Thomson (1978: 46,

51), the missionary who accompanied him on his return in 1839, describes Temoana's "relapse into the savage", but makes no mention of a waiting wife or of a subsequent marriage (on this issue, see also Dening 1980: 151).

This young bride was most likely Apekua, the elder of the two sisters. By the time the French arrived in 1842 to take possession of the archipelago, Temoana had a wife named Tahiaʻoko, who is probably, but not definitely, Apekua.[10] The number of children they had, either naturally or by adoption, is disputed, but we know that there was one son, Taniha (Stanislas) Moanatini, who survived and became Temoana's heir, and a blind daughter named Tikiahutini.[11] According to Edmond de Ginoux (2001: 79), in 1849 when he visited Taiohaʻe, Tahiaʻoko had left Temoana for the third and final time and he had married the daughter of a chief of Ua Pou, who was "unwell and seemed to not have a long time to live".

By 1850, Vaekehu had become Temoana's wife. According to Le Cléach'h (n.d.: 1), like Temoana she had been married before—to a Hapaʻa chief with whom she had a daughter (both apparently died early on). By all accounts, Vaekehu and Temoana had no children born of their union. According to her descendants, Vaekehu was required by custom to take her older sister's place as Temoana's wife and care for his children, Tikiahutini and Taniha, whom she adopted. Tikiahutini was still alive in 1852, but may have died not long after that; Taniha remained an important part of her life until his death in 1894.

Vaekehu was raised at a time when many Marquesan customs were still practiced, as evidenced by her extentive tattoos. From the late 1840s on, her tattoos were commented upon—and several times drawn—by nearly everyone who met her, and always in glowing terms. In the early 1850s, Jacques Arago (1854 vol. II: 13) wrote that Vaekehu was "truly queen because the designs of her body are magnificent... everyone admires them". Pierre Loti drew them in detail when he visited in 1872, noting (1976: 71) that Vaekehu consented "with perfect graciousness" to pose for him. She was still exhibiting them around 1883 when Aylic Marin met her ([E. Petit] 1891: 197). He reported: "When I had seen her, she deigned to permit me to admire her arms and her calves; the designs of her arms are especially remarkable; besides the name (which is always inscribed on the left arm), I saw on this royal skin a quantity of beautiful images, of small fish, of fruits, of leaves."

She had suffered great pain as a young girl when being tattooed; Marin reported that she nearly died as a result. Robert Louis Stevenson's mother, Margaret Stevenson, who met the queen in 1888 and quite liked her, wrote that, "The queen's hands are covered with the finest tattooing I have yet seen, all over the back, like exquisite lace mittens; but I noticed that only the first finger was done, the others being untouched. I asked her son the reason for

this, and he shrugged his shoulders and said, 'It is too painful' " (1903: 115).[12] Albert Davin learned more about the queen's tattooing in 1886. He quotes her (1886: 218-19) as saying, through her interpreter:

> Oh I suffered cruelly. I cried much.... For several days my hands stayed large as breadfruits. It was in vain that I asked my mother to put an end to my suffering. All was useless. It was necessary that the tattooing of my hands and arms to my shoulders, of the feet and the knees, of the mouth and the ears, reveal my noble origin.

Davin went on to explain that the tattoos were by different artists from the island of Ua Pou (home of the best tattooers in the archipelago at that time) but done so well and so similarly that they appear the work of one.

Life with Temoana was difficult for Vaekehu as it had been for Tahiaʻoko, owing in part to his use and abuse of alcohol. In an 1850 incident, for example, Temoana declared war on the French when some soldiers killed two pigs. Actual hostilities were averted primarily through the efforts of Bishop Dordillon, the Catholic missionary, who noted (in Delmas 1929: 87-88): "His [Temoana's] wife was quite grieved [*toute desolée*], and attributed all to the drink." Arago, describing Temoana about the same time, said that he drank much wine, and would drink all the time if he could. After taking a short walk with the king, in which an inebriated Temoana managed to destroy two roofs and three dinghies, he quotes the king as defending himself, saying, "You see, I hit neither man nor woman" and intimated that the damage he did was good for his people, providing work for them (1854 vol. II: 8, 15).

The French continued to support Temoana and Vaekehu despite Temoana's erratic behaviour. However, in 1852, a serious incident took place in which Temoana and Vaekehu came to be at serious odds with the French, resulting in their arrest and deportation to Tahiti. Chaulet (1873: 109-16) recorded it in Vaekehu's own words, published later by Delmas (1929: 90-95), as recounted in the indented paragraphs below (my translation and summary from the French). Here we catch a glimpse of her strong personality, and of her courage and leadership role.

> The situation involved an Italian by the name of Motto, who became an enemy of Temoana's when Temoana prevented Motto from bringing women to visiting ships to service the sailors. Shortly after this incident, the French Commandant at Taiohaʻe, Bolle, demanded from Temoana some pigs that were being fattened in preparation for a feast to honour Temoana's deceased father. When the chiefs who were keeping the pigs in another valley came innocently to discuss the pig situation with Temoana, Motto told Bolle that they had actually come to plan a war. Bolle believed Motto, and relations became strained.

Temoana, probably drunk according to Vaekehu, decided to go to Bolle to proclaim his innocence in any war scheme and at the same time to chastise Bolle for what he saw as unseemly approaches to the queen. Motto took advantage of this to accuse Temoana of various things, including nearly killing him. Other chiefs, enemies of Temoana, also came to accuse him. At Bolle's request, Temoana went to the government offices, only to be kept overnight under guard. The next morning Vaekehu, along with Bishop Dordillon, went to Bolle to entreat him to let Temoana go free. Vaekehu says she cried "hot tears" and finally, after consultation with Vincent, another French officer, Bolle let Temoana return home. Meanwhile the French prepared an assault on them.

Vaekehu and Temoana took their blind daughter, Tikiahutini, deep into the valley and returned alone to their house. Vaekehu improvised a French *tricolore* flag and again went with Dordillon, this time to entreat Bolle to call off his war with Temoana. Although he pitied her, Bolle refused her pleas. Vaekehu returned to her husband, her face covered, so as not to see the armed soldiers, her legs trembling, and several times nearly falling. She told her husband they must leave because a bombardment was about to start, Temoana responded that they were falsely accused and suggested they stay there to die.

Vaekehu, however, had other ideas. She pulled her husband out of the house, and then with the help of Temoana's grandfather forced him into the nearby Hoata valley, where they raised Vaekehu's flag. Motto convinced Bolle that this show of loyalty was merely a ruse, and the bombardment began, after which the French destroyed or stole all of their belongings. Motto, acting as Bolle's intermediary and interpreter, fanned the flames and convinced Bolle that Temoana was mocking and resisting him. Protesting his innocence, Temoana, accompanied by Dordillon went to Bolle's residence and was placed under house arrest.

According to Vaekehu, Bolle, thinking the people of Hoʻoumi were allies of Temoana, sent two ships to the neighbouring valley and, even though that all the inhabitants had fled, because they wanted no part in war, the ships bombarded and destroyed the valley. Bolle then exiled Temoana and Vaekehu, sending them to Tahiti on 8 October 1852. There Governor Page was convinced of their innocence and, after only ten days, sent them back to Taiohaʻe. As they had no residence, they had to stay with Bishop Dordillon. Governor Page came to Taiohaʻe in January 1853, reinstated the king and queen, reprimanded Bolle, and fired Motto.

On 29 June 1853,Vaekehu and Temoana, along with their families and many of their followers, 62 people in all, were baptised Catholic by Bishop Dordillon. Delmas stated that they had been thinking about converting since their return from Tahiti, so perhaps the move was in part political.[13] The king and queen took the names Elisabeth (Eritapeta) and Charles (Karoro). A huge feast was held in which 80 large pigs were cooked. From this time

on, they were faithful supporters of the Catholic Church and forged a deep and lasting relationship with Dordillon. Vaekehu, for example, adopted him (and numerous other missionaries) as her grandson, providing them with her personal protection (Delmas 1929: 97-98, R. Stevenson 1900: 78).[14]

Over the next nine years, Temoana and Vaekehu worked with Bishop Dordillon to convert their fellow Marquesans. Dordillon bought a boat, which he named “Elisabeth”, to travel from valley to valley. Their methods were direct and often destructive. Captain W.T. McGrath, for example, in a letter (1912) told of an expedition in which the three came to the Hapa‘a valley on board a French man-o’-war, and proceeded to defile the sacred *paepae* there by burning incense on them, spitting on the stone gods, and forcing women onto them.[15] Temoana also fought a number of wars with neighbouring valleys in the name of religion—with the Tai‘oa in 1859 and with the Taipi in 1862.

Temoana died 12 September 1863 of pleurisy. At the same time, Nuku Hiva and nearby Ua Pou were experiencing a horrendous epidemic of smallpox introduced when the French ship, *Diamant*, left 12 dying people in the care of the missionaries at Taioha‘e. Within seven months, over 1500 Marquesans perished. Vaekehu survived, taking refuge at the mission compound (Delmas 1929: 158-59, 168). Now began the final phase of her life, some 38 years as the “last queen” of Nuku Hiva.

VAEKEHU, THE QUEEN, LIVES ON

The last part of the 19th century was a very difficult time in Marquesan history, when people were dying and the culture was in collapse.[16] Vaekehu, now a devout Catholic and financially supported by the French administration, took refuge in her new religion. By all accounts, she lived a mostly quiet life surrounded by children and grandchildren, and a retinue of women and men.

Various visitors mentioned that Vaekehu had both a daughter and a granddaughter named Elisabeth, and it appears that there were, in fact, at least two women with the name (in addition to Vaekehu herself). Davin (1886: 228) wrote that after having lost the daughter she had by Temoana (Tikiahutini?), Vaekehu adopted two children: Elisabeth, who had the dual role of interpreter and “lady of company”, and Taniha/Stanislas. Loti (1976: 70), who visited Vaekehu in 1872, wrote of two women who served as “attendants” and interpreters for Vaekehu, one of whom was named Elisabeth, and Margaret Stevenson (1903: 109) noted that “an adopted daughter sat beside Vaekehu and acted as interpreter” in 1888.

Stanislas was the high chief of Haka‘ui Valley and is spoken of frequently and in most positive terms by numerous visitors. Through the auspices of Bishop Dordillon, he attended school in Valparaiso, Chile, between 1856 and 1861. Stanislas helped bring about a peaceful accommodation with the

French in the northern Marquesas in 1880, and then served as a civil servant and goodwill ambassador for the French until his death in 1894 (Marin 1891: 161, Rollin 1929: 286, R. Stevenson 1900: 69). He had two wives: first, Tahiakoetoa, a woman much his elder from Ua Pou; and then Sabine (Tahiautuani or Tahiautuoho), from Vaitahu on Tahuata (Chaulet 1873: 161, 179, Le Cleac'h n.d.: 1-2). Stanislas adopted Tahiakoetoa's daughter, Tonita Apekua, born in 1859, while he was a teenager and in Chile. She was living with Vaekehu in 1863 when the smallpox epidemic broke out and might be the Elisabeth who was later Vaekehu's interpreter (Chaulet 1873: 161, 205). Stanislas moved in with Sabine in the mid-1860s, by which time Vaekehu was a devout Catholic, and she now saw this as an adulterous relationship. This caused her great distress until the two married, many years later (Chaulet 1873: 179, Le Cleac'h n.d.: 2). Stanislas and Sabine had several children of whom two daughters survived: Elisabeth Vaekehu, born around 1865, who became high chiefess/queen of the island of Tahuata; and Marianne, born around 1872, who became chiefess of Haka'ui valley on Nuku Hiva. Willowdean Handy, who met Elisabeth Vaekehu in 1921, said she was adopted by Stanislas. Marin also specifically pointed out that one of the girls was Stanislas's "actual daughter", which was "a surprise in this place" where adoption was so common (Handy 1965: 42, Le Cleac'h n.d.: 2-3, Marin 1891: 256-57, Rollin 1929: 268). In 1873, a ceremony took place in which the then French administrator, Eyriaud des Vergnes, and Stanislas exchanged names and, at that time, Stanislas adopted an infant boy named Pakauoteia, who was known later as Rario (Delmas 1929: 267). Their descendants abound on several Marquesan islands today.

A visit to Vaekehu remained the highlight for many of the travellers who came through Taioha'e from this time until her death. Notable among her many visitors were Pierre Loti (1872), Robert Louis Stevenson (1888), F.W. Christian (1894) and Karl von den Steinen (1897). Those who visited the queen in the last decades of her life speak of her piety, her quiet dignity, her devotion to the Catholic Church, especially to the nuns with whom she spent much of her day, and her loyalty to the French. Many questioned how much she understood of her new faith, but none her devotion to or practice of it. Eyriaud des Vergnes noted, regarding her Catholicism, "We don't pretend that she has yet an exact idea of the importance of her acts, but she has the conviction at least to do well" (1877: 18; see also Caillot 1910: 380).

Vaekehu showed this firm commitment when she took a strong position regarding the practices and behaviour that would be acceptable at two festivals held at Taioha'e in 1869 (Delmas 1929: 215-17). The first of these was a traditional funerary feast (*mau*), given by a man named Pehipo. Delegations twice went to the queen to invite her to come. She refused, saying that she

could not come, as this would be a pagan feast and she was a Christian and did not want to scandalise her subjects. The festival took place without the queen, but with the support of the French administrator, Eyriaud des Vergnes. It was, apparently, much in the old style, a veritable “abomination”.

The second fête was planned for 15 August 1869, a feast day, and was to take place in a great house built in front of the queen’s home. She shamed several people when she refused them lodging with her, fearing their lewd behaviour. She finally agreed to attend when promises were made that all would be proper, and this apparently was the case, at least until she and the nuns and clergy who accompanied her had left. Thereafter apparently the festival changed its tone. Though we do not know specifically what happened, the account speaks about “passions reawakened” and the lasting consequences of the *débauche*.

Vaekehu displayed her wealth and position, and the lingering hold of the old ways when she held her own feast to honour her dead husband Temoana, on 3 September 1872, nine years after his death. Such a feast would have been necessary in earlier times, and now she combined it with her new religion. Two hundred people from Nuku Hiva and Ua Pou attended a solemn mass, then moved in procession to Temoana’s grave and, finally, shared a great feast (Delmas 1929: 264-65).

According to Eyriaud des Vergnes, her life was simple and all her needs met through an annual pension of 600 francs from the French government and from gifts given to her by Marquesans and by foreign visitors. She retained control of the valley of Haka‘ui and Collet Bay adjacent to Taioha‘e, which, Marin says, she used as a vast park for her sheep and pigs. Davin tells of her love for cats and white chickens, both of which roamed freely in large numbers through her house (Davin 1886: 221, Eyriaud des Vergnes 1877: 18, Marin 1891: 189).

Vaekehu had two houses, near to each other, one European in style, always described as clean and neat, and one close by the sea built in Marquesan style on her mother, Paetini’s, *paepae* ‘stone platform’ named Pikivehine. Her only “vice” seems to have been her fondness for her pipe, and as Mrs Stevenson recounts (1903: 109; see also Loti 1976: 70), an occasional adventure in rolling a cigarette. One of the most striking of her furnishings was a gold-framed lithograph of the Empress Eugénie, upon which was placed a handwritten card changing the identification to “Madame, Marechal de MacMahon”. This naïve way of staying politically correct through changing French governments gave much amusement to her visitors (Blin 1881: 242, Davin: 1886: 217).[17] For all of her retiring ways, Vaekehu became a respected, influential and judicious political leader, usually supporting the French government of the day. As late as the 1870s she presided at meetings of the

chiefs, where, Eyriaud des Vergnes reported (1877: 19), if they saw "her in accord with the [French] resident, one can be sure that the measure will be adopted unanimously, without any contrary manifestation; if necessary, Vaekehu addresses to all the chiefs some words which put to an end all hesitation on their part".

Despite this power, or perhaps because foreign visitors did not discern it, she was not considered to be particularly intelligent by many who described a vapid, lethargic scene surrounding the queen and her court. Loti (1976: 69, 71), for example, wrote:

> Seated the whole day in a half-doze, they remain motionless and silent as idols. This is the court of Nuku Hiva, Queen Vaekehu and her retainers.... The thoughts that contort the strange face of the Queen remain a mystery to all, and the secret of her eternal reveries is impenetrable. Is it sadness or stupor? Is she dreaming about something or nothing at all? Does she mourn for her independence, and the savagery which is disappearing, and her people who are degenerating and becoming estranged from her?

Always such criticism is tempered with respect for her dignity. Caillot, who met her in 1900 not long before her death, said that she was "less intelligent than Queen Pomare [of Tahiti], but on the other hand, she was better than her; she had above all more dignity" (1910: 379). R.L. Stevenson and his family were quite taken with the queen in 1888, and wrote warmly of her, and at length (1900: 71):

> Vaekehu is very deaf; 'merci' is her only word of French; and I do not know that she seemed clever....[She] sat among us, eating or smoking her cigarette, quite cut off from all society, or only now and then included through the intermediary of her son. It was a position that might have been ridiculous, and she made it ornamental; making believe to hear and to be entertained; her face, whenever she met our eyes, lighting with the smile of good society; her contributions to the talk, when she made any, and that was seldom, always complimentary and pleasing. No attention was paid to the child [her great granddaughter], for instance, but what she remarked and thanked us for. Her parting with each, when she came to leave, was gracious and pretty, as had been every step of her behaviour. When Mrs. Stevenson held out her hand to say good-bye, Vaekehu took it, held it, and a moment smiled upon her; dropped it, and then, as upon a kindly afterthought, and with a sort of warmth of condescension, held out both hands and kissed my wife upon both cheeks.... when I kissed the little girl good-bye at the pier steps, Vaekehu gave a cry of gratification—reached down her hand into the boat, took mine, and pressed it with that flattering softness which seems the coquetry of the old lady in every quarter of the earth.

Vaekehu's concern for her grandchildren and their legacy in the land embroiled her in something of a legal battle near the end of her life. Land rights were changing, and Vaekehu feared that the valley of Haka'ui, which her family controlled, might be sold. Before he died in 1894, Vaekehu had taken the dramatic step of adopting Stanislas under French law and legally deeding him the land so that the title could not be contested. In 1897, the inhabitants of Haka'ui, fearing that Marianne, now in possession of the valley, might try to profit by selling it to a European and expelling them, asked the queen to take back legal title. Vaekehu, accompanied by all of the people of Haka'ui and by her grandchildren, appeared one day in front of the Residence of the then administrator, one M. Thuret. There, in front of all, Marianne promised the inhabitants and their descendants that she would not sell the valley, and that they would be guaranteed ownership of the land they occupied. Satisfied with this solemn promise, Vaekehu withdrew her claim to the land. Sadly, in 1925 after Marianne died, her heirs sold the land and most of the inhabitants, dispossessed and ruined, were forced to move from the valley (Rollin 1929: 268-87, Handy 1965: 181).

It was sometimes hard for visitors to forget that the Marquesans had been (and in some instances in the late 19th century, still were) cannibals. This label was attached to the queen, at times in general terms, as when Loti (1976: 72) called her, "formerly a pagan and something of a cannibal". Even Robert Louis Stevenson (1900: 72) described her as "a queen of cannibals". By the 1890s, it had become a more specific charge. Hall and Osborne, who met her in the late 1890s wrote: "The common report about her, which I believe is true, is that years ago she got tired of her husband, the prince consort, and had him killed and ate him" (1901: 103). Some were more sceptical, though, such as Pallander, (1901: 257-58) who cautioned, "… if they should tell you the yarn about her having helped eat her first husband, you had best treat it as pure fable." Old stories die hard, though, for on the back of the photograph from the American Museum of Natural History used in this article (Fig. 1) was a handwritten note (probably copied from a note by the photographer, Alfred Mayer): "Vaekehu, queen of the Marquesas. She ate her first husband."

Vaekehu died in June 1901. She had been preparing for this event for a long time. Loti thought she was dying when he saw her, ill and having received the last sacrament, in 1872 (1976: 71-72). When Robert Louis Stevenson arrived in 1888, her soul was at rest, he said, because, after ten years, the priests had finally allowed her to have her coffin (1900: 31-32).[18] Caillot described her simple funeral in a footnote (1910: 380):

> A long line of children preceded her body, followed by the brigadier of the gendarmerie, the head of the post office, representing the French government,

> the few foreigners established at Nuku-Hiva, and the natives of all the valleys of the islands, these latter crying and saying prayers. Rev. Chaulet led the religious ceremony.

She was laid to rest next to her husband in a small mausoleum perched on a little hill not far from the Catholic mission and her European-style home. She lies there today, her much-weathered mausoleum still overlooking her old *paepae* and Taiohaʻe bay.

* * *

Vaekehu's life was a testament to and a reflection of the fortitude and resilience of the Marquesan people. When she was born around 1823, Marquesans were still living much as they had for generations before them. Her status was determined by her genealogy, and it made her a very powerful and influential person, regardless of her gender. While still young, she was tattooed over major portions of her body. The designs remained visible her entire life and marked, as she said, "her noble origins". Given her high position and standing in numerous tribes that held power throughout the island, it is not surprising that, in the Marquesan way, her marriage was a highly political, if not always a happy one. Her union with Temoana, like that of her sister, was necessary to unite the island and ensure peace. In Marquesan fashion, also, she solidified this peace by adopting children and grandchildren from important families and from different valleys.

After Europeans arrived, particularly the French, she proved herself level headed and courageous, entering into negotiations to avoid war and mitigating her husband's often hot-headed and impetuous actions. She was the one in 1853 who made a French *tricolore* flag to attempt a truce, moved her family to safety, and maintained her dignity despite bombardment and imprisonment. In the end, she was loyal and stood by Temoana in changing, and often difficult, circumstances.

Her commitments to Catholicism and to the French were perhaps necessary if she were to remain influential and comfortable, particularly after Temoana's death in 1863. As a widow in a country where both the population and culture were dying convulsive deaths, it should not be surprising that Vaekehu should seek peace and some solace with the missionary nuns living near her. She set an example for her people to follow, living a quiet, if at times seemingly desolate, life. She graciously played the role of queen for the rest of her life, receiving visitors, using her influence to foster agreement among the island's chiefs and with the French administrators, trying to maintain peace and discourage behaviours that, no longer rooted in a meaningful cultural framework, only served to further demoralise many Marquesan people.

When she died at the very beginning of the 20th century, the population was nearly at its lowest level and the archipelago a mostly forgotten outpost of the French empire. Both Marquesan people and culture, including many of the arts, were being lost. Their decline and eventual death, like Vaekehu's, seemed inevitable to many. Happily, this was not the outcome. The resiliency and spirit that Vaekehu personified has been reawakened in the Marquesas. The population is now well over 10,000 in the Marquesas (with a greater number of Marquesans living in Tahiti), and Marquesan culture is undergoing a veritable renaissance. It is fitting that Vaekehu and Temoana have been remembered and revered along the way.

In 1989, the Second Festival of Marquesan Art was held at Taiohaʻe. The festival grounds were built adjacent to where Vaekehu's *paepae*, Pikivehine, stands and the dates, 28-30 June, jointly commemorated the contemporary Autonomy Day holiday, as well as the date of Vaekehu and Temoana's baptism, 29 June 1853. Many large stone sculptures were carved and placed around the grounds for the Festival. One of these, carved by Severin Kaheʻe Taupotini, is a replica of the Marquesan house that originally stood on her *paepae* and depicts the royal family. On one end of the house, Temoana looks out to the sea, and on the other, facing her hilltop grave, an image of Vaekehu fills the central spot. She has pride of place here and is flanked by Temoana and by smaller figures representing her descendants. Facing the land and the people, she remains a revered ancestor and role model, part of the past but still very present in the life of the people—enshrined in a most fitting and most moving monument to her memory.

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NOTES

1. Archaeologist Robert C. Suggs (pers. comm., 1997) estimates this number based on reports by Capt. David Porter in 1813 (Porter 1822).

2. It is important to note that unlike Pomare in the Society Islands or Kamehameha in Hawai‘i, the Marquesas Islands were not unified under a single monarch, and no dynasty was founded. Temoana and Vaekehu were dubbed king and queen of the island of Nuku Hiva, but in reality in the Marquesas power remained a negotiated entity between high chiefs of the different valleys/tribes on the different islands. While Vaekehu was highly esteemed, as this narrative demonstrates, she had none of the authority or status of a European monarch.
3. There were two major tribal alliances on Nuku Hiva, one led by the Te I‘i and the other by the Taipi tribes. All Nuku Hiva tribes are descended from them. They trace themselves back to two brothers, Taipi nui a vaku and Te I‘i nui a haku (Suggs pers. comm., 1997). Nuku Hiva is one of six inhabited islands in the Marquesan archipelago.
4. The genealogical material is drawn from Robarts (1974: 328), Thomas (1990: Fig. 4), Crook (1800) and Le Cléac’h (n.d.). There are numerous spellings for these Marquesan personal names, as well as for island and site names, in the literature. Except in direct quotes, the ones in this article agree, for the most part, with current common usage.
5. Père Mathias Gracia, an astute observer in the Marquesas between 1839 and 1842, wrote that if there was no male heir, the only or oldest female inherited the authority and land of the chief, and she alone retained the title and authority (1843: 102). Two earlier visitors to Nuku Hiva, W.P. Crook (1800) and E. Robarts (1974) also mentioned several instances of women owning their own property or holding chiefly titles.
6. See Dening (1980: 78-83) for this paragraph and the following two.
7. These are the “Typee” of Herman Melville’s book (1972) by the same name first published in 1846.
8. In the Marquesas, women (not men) had multiple spouses: a primary husband who was the recognised father of any children, as well as one or more secondary husbands, called *vahana pekio*. Paetini had 32 *vahana pekio* according to Max Radiguet (1929: 165).
9. Note that, again, a woman is cited and it is implied that it is through her that Temoana receives his status.
10. The family today insists that Temoana had only two wives, Apekua and Vaekehu, and do not recognise the name Tahia‘oko. Marquesans did and still do have numerous names, add names for a variety of reasons and use different names in different situations, so it is entirely possible that Apekua used a different name after Temoana’s return. Tahia‘oko’s own turbulent relationship with Temoana is described at length by Collet (1844) and Radiguet (1929), and is a story all its own.
11. Reports of the children (and grandchildren) of Temoana’s marriages are contradictory and confusing. Sorting out and tracking down all of the names is daunting owing to numerous adoptions, the reoccurrence and overlapping use of names (Marquesan, French and French names translated to Marquesan), and conflicting birth and death dates, and is beyond the scope of this article. The information about Taniha and Tikiahutini is from O’Reilly (1979: 551).

12. Karl von den Steinen illustrated his account with an 1849 drawing of a hand by Charles Noury and an 1846 sketch of a leg by naval Lt. Olivier, identified as Vaekehu's hand and leg (1925: 130, 106, 199). The drawing of the hand shows two fingers without tattoo marks. Steinen visited the Marquesas in 1897 and met Vaekehu then.
13. Steinen (1925: 39) attributed the conversion to the "obligation" Dordillon had placed on Temoana by helping to free him during this incident. I am grateful to Robert Suggs for his translation of this section of Steinen.
14. Adoption was (and is) a most frequent practice among Marquesans and children were (and are) often spoken for long before being born. Adoptions were desirable for many reasons, including, as has been documented in Vaekehu's life, political ones.
15. Delmas (1929: 113-16) also tells of Temoana breaking *tapu* as a way to undermine Marquesan religious practices. It should be noted that Delmas, who arrived in the Marquesas in 1886, depended in great part on the records made by Pere Chaulet (1873), as also did Rollin.
16. Dening (1980) sensitively describes this period and its horrors in Chapter 7: "Violent Death".
17. Marshal MacMahon served as Chief of State of France from 1873 to 1875 and as the first president of the Third Republic from 1875 to 1879 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrice_de_Mac-Mahon, Duke_of_Magenta, 12 April 2014).
18. It was common practice in the Marquesas to have one's coffin made before one died, and kept near in the last days (see Dening 1980: 181).

ABSTRACT

Born on Nuku Hiva around 1823, Vaekehu was a high-ranking woman in a line of powerful and wealthy Marquesan women. She grew up in a period when the "old ways" were still vital and the structure of "traditional" Marquesan life intact. She married Temoana, the island's highest-ranking chief; their high status led the French to dub them "king" and "queen" of Nuku Hiva. She lived until 1901, and her long life, which was recorded by numerous writers and artists, mirrored the dramatic changes that occurred in the archipelago in the 19th century because of depopulation, missionisation and colonisation.

Keywords: Marquesas, Vaekehu, colonial history, French Polynesia

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‘AIMATA, QUEEN POMARE IV: THWARTING ADVERSITY IN EARLY 19TH CENTURY TAHITI

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To tell the story of ‘Aimata, Pomare IV is to tell a story of change. Queen Pomare IV reigned as monarch of Tahiti for 50 years (1827-77). During this time Christianity became commonplace, *ari‘i* (chiefs in the traditional political system) became legislators (in a European political system) and Tahiti became French. Pomare IV has been frequently depicted as an inept ruler, at best a figurehead. It was her “fault” that the French took “possession” of Tahiti, and perhaps her “fault” that the traditional system of leadership seemed to fade away. These 19th-century assessments of both the British and French have created a distorted image of the woman and her reign as politically

incompetent, when they might be seen otherwise as politically astute, rife with intrigue and manipulation. Instead of viewing Pomare as the pawn of missionaries and consulates, this essay will demonstrate the unprecedented position she created as Queen Pomare IV.

'Aimata, first-born of Pomare II, was destined to be a woman of stature within the traditional social system of Tahiti. She was born sometime between 1810-1813,[1] before the adoption of Christianity in Tahiti. She inherited *mana* and a presence associated with her rank. From her father, who had consolidated the titles of Tahiti after a victory at Fei Pi (1815),[2] she held title to Tahiti. Her mother, Teremoemoe, from the Tamatoa line linked her to Ra'iātea and Huahine; with her marriage to Tapoa she was tied to Bora Bora. She could easily assert her position as a powerful or "great woman" (Gunson 1964) of Tahiti. However, this interpretation is quite different from that of Pere O'Reilly (1972: 2): "*Elle est fille adulterine de Pomare II, la fille d'une femme que les missionaries designent pudiquement comme une 'epouse surnumeraire' du roi.*"[3]

It is clear that the missionaries, in their role as chiefly advisors, misunderstood the position of 'Aimata and consequently ignored her. The foundation of a patrilineal monarchy was established by Pomare II,[4] which allowed the missionaries to sidestep the traditional status system. Teinaiti, a younger brother born in 1817 became the heir. The missionaries[5] of the London Missionary Society (LMS) were pleased that the Pomare line would continue. Unfortunately this infant heir died within the year and British concern about the viability of the Pomare dynasty heightened. Pomare II followed established custom by adopting Tapoa II of Bora Bora in 1820, the adoption conferring all the rights of a son. An heir was now in position within both the traditional framework as well as acceptable Christian patrilineal succession. Tapoa's claim was reinforced when he married 'Aimata in the same year.[6] All of this political manoeuvering, however, was put to the side with the birth of another son, Teri'itaria (also in 1820), to Pomare II.

At the death of Pomare II in 1821 the missionaries and other European advisers to the "crown" were in a quandary. Should they observe Tahitian social structure and consent to support the succession of an adopted son, or follow their own tradition and support an infant King? The choice was an easy one. In 1824 the LMS missionary Henry Nott crowned Teri'itaria as Pomare III with a great deal of pomp and ceremony. He also took advantage of the Regency so established to request of George IV, in the name of Pomare III, an English flag and British protection over Tahiti (Newbury 1961: 234). The missionaries also undertook the training of this youth.

> April 21, 1824, he was taken into the institution at Afareaitu with the miss. children, and was making a very pleasing progress in the English language,

> and in reading and writing when death put a period to his life and to the fond expectations of all parties Jan 11th 1827. (Newbury 1961: 234)

The death of Pomare III in 1827 at the age of six-and-a-half years was a blow to Nott and his colleague George Pritchard. They had hoped to create both the ideal king as well as ensure for themselves a position of privilege. Reluctantly, as their aspirations for a monarchy were in jeopardy, they turned to ‘Aimata.

At a meeting of chiefs, ‘Aimata was invested as Pomare Vahine. This delegation of authority was done with little official pomp; all involved were uncertain of the outcome. The missionaries had previously ignored ‘Aimata. She was a young girl of strong character not easily influenced by missionary doctrine; she would not be easily manipulated. She had not accepted Christianity and was, therefore, seen as a problem both to the mission and the creation of an ideal monarchy. The missionaries questioned whether the chiefs would pay her deference; the chiefs, in turn, were uncertain about what the elevation of Pomare IV would mean to them. Wanting to consolidate their own position *vis-á-vis* the Pomare women (‘Aimata, Teremoemoe, Teri‘itaria[7]), and perhaps regain the position they held prior to the battle of Fei Pi, the chiefs formed an uneasy alliance with the missionaries. The result was a decade of political manoeuvring as all the players sought positions within the monarchy of Pomare IV.

THE EARLY YEARS 1827-38

The missionaries' apprehensions about Pomare IV were well founded. During what has been termed the Regency period (1821-27) "the journals of the Tahitian missionaries are filled with reports of lawbreaking and the scheming of the chiefs" (Gunson 1962: 213). There were many reversions to "heathenism",[8] as the chiefs jockeyed for position and power. Within the traditional structure, chiefs were privileged, although many of their rights had been revoked by the Pomare Code of 1819,[9] which established rules of conduct in a Christian era. But without Pomare II to enforce the Code, a return to the old rules of behaviour appeared especially likely where they reinforced rank and status.

In contrast, the strategy of Tati and Utami, chiefs of Papara and Puna‘auia respectively, was to align themselves with the missionaries and the Pomare Code.

> As governors and judges under the law, they retained much of the power, which they had been in danger of losing under Pomare II. Under the Regency, they attempted to consolidate power and build up their prestige. As Supreme Judges of Tahiti, they gathered around themselves much of the old pomp of their former high chiefly status. (Gunson 1962: 222)

In so doing they also set themselves in opposition to Pomare IV.

Pomare IV was seen to be a key player in the reversion to "heathenism". Her court was "a virtual centre of 'heathen' resistance to missionary teaching" (Gunson 1962: 228) as well as to the laws of her father. She delighted in watching dance performances and was apt to demand tribute—practices prohibited by the Pomare Code. "Her companions were reminiscent of 18th century *arioi*—mostly 'wild young men' who practiced tattooing, made cider from fermented mangoes, and slept and ate with the royal couple" (Newbury 1980: 60). She also appeared to be sympathetic to the *mamaia* movement, which was not only anti-missionary but made a mockery of Christianity (Gunson 1962: 212).

This movement was met with hostility by the chiefs who were using their association with the missionary as a means to power. Tati and Utami expelled from their districts any person that displayed an interest in the *mamaia*. This allowed for the consolidation of the movement in Pape'ete (where Pomare was located), which in turn fuelled the political tensions between her and the chiefs. Chiefs of lesser status who had not acquired the position of legislator were more willing to support Pomare, almost certainly hoping to be offered lands or titles as reward. The missionaries viewed Pomare's activities as "youthful lapses of character" (Newbury 1961: 327). However, this realignment of chiefs demonstrated an acute ability on the part of Pomare to manipulate the traditional political system.

In 1827 Vaira'atoa, a well-respected and very powerful chief, suggested that certain laws in the Pomare Code be revoked, particularly ones dealing with tribute and the presentation of cloth. His alignment with Pomare IV is thus clear, as restoration of these practices would help consolidate her position. It is also clear that the mission regarded this suggestion as anti-church and anti-law. Matthew Crook (a missionary from Vaira'atoa's district) wrote: "… the old chiefs make very much of them [Pomare and her husband], present them with large heaps of cloth and seem inclined to do away with the laws and set up many of the old customs again" (in Newbury 1980: 60). The inability or unwillingness of the missionaries to understand the politics of the situation positioned them as onlookers. Tati and Utami stood firm on their position as legislators. By December 1828 they threatened 'Aimata with court proceedings and told her that she was not above the law. She backed down, but only for the time being.

As Pomare and Vaira'atoa jockeyed against Tati and Utami tensions mounted. In 1829-30 Pomare countered with the "cloth incident". According to the Pomare Code, as Pomare IV she was paid an annual stipend in lieu of tribute. She asked the people of Mo'orea and Tahiti to provide her with cloth to offer to Leeward chiefs when they came to visit her in these places.

Such requests had been customary ten years earlier, but her enemies saw the requests as an attempt to prove titular superiority (which she had) and threatened her with jail for breaking the law. Political intrigue always seems petty in hindsight, yet missionary John Orsmond noted at the time "that the charge that Pomare wished to do away with all law was a mere made up tale... trumped up by the chiefs to give colouring to their ill found opposition" (Gunson 1962: 230-31).

In 1830-31 Tapoa, ʻAimata's husband, found himself embroiled in a power struggle with the chiefs of Huahine (the family of his wife's mother). This allowed for another opportunity for alliances to shift and a readjustment of the power structure. When Tapoa led warriors against Huahine, he was imprisoned. Pomare IV took advantage of his imprisonment to rid herself of Tapoa. She then took as a second husband, Ariʻifaʻaite of Huahine. Missionary Nott condoned this action by marrying them. His participation signalled a new alliance between Pomare IV and the missionaries. Thus, her old foes Tati and Utami also found themselves "aligned" with her. She was already aligned with the Leeward group through blood and marriage.

Pomare IV's allies in the "cloth incident" opposed this new alliance of Pomare, Nott and the Tahitian judges. Moʻorea and Tairaʻapu (eastern Tahiti) took the Queen to court, asserting that it was against the law to divorce, and lost. The Queen was above the law. An armed revolt ensued in which Pomare and her new allies quite effectively squashed the rebellion. This "put an end to attempts to restore the former customs of Tahiti, and to organised political agitation" (Gunson 1962: 236). The Queen confirmed her alliance with the missionaries by being baptised in 1836. For the time being, the judicial system of the islands was on her side.

Ian Campbell (1992: 79) has noted that "Polynesian history shows unremitting calculation and determination to seize whatever advantages circumstances offered". Pomare's shift of allegiance is a clear example of this opportunism. Pomare rightly understood the power that the legislators (Tati, Utami, Hitoti, Paʻofai) wielded within the structure of the Toʻohitu (judicial body set up under the Pomare Code).[10] She also understood how to optimise her own position in relation to these legislators. At the same time, manipulating the traditional political system with all its intricacies was a game deftly played by Pomare and her adversaries, and both sides quickly learned how to hold the missionaries at bay.

Another factor in this strategy was the necessity for control of a burgeoning trade and an increase in the number of foreigners living in Tahiti. Traders, whalers and sailors were more problematic than internal tensions, and "equally undesirable from the missionary point of view" (Orsmond in Newbury 1961: 352). The influx of foreign goods and the markets they

established did not balance the disease, drunkenness and disorder that came with them. Pomare realised that she needed the law and the missionaries to control other Europeans and their interests. It was not uncommon to see up to ten ships in port at any time. With this influx came the creation of visitor entertainments in the form of grog-shops, billiard rooms and prostitution (Newbury 1961, 1980). Drunken and disorderly behaviour was common, as were altercations between and within ships' companies, and attempts to control foreign behaviour were not readily accepted. The Pomare Code, once the foe of Pomare IV, became her prime weapon.

The Code was enforced by *mutoi* 'police', who were often lesser chiefs within the traditional system, and as protectors of the peace they had to answer only to the court. Most offences were punishable by fines and their salaries were paid from these fines. Thus "Queen Pomare's constables, enforced these laws in an undiscriminating fashion by placing both the guilty and the suspect in the stocks" (Newbury 1961: 333). Visitors (whalers and traders) were not at all happy with this new morality.

The Code of Laws was revised and extended to Europeans. Now included was a section prohibiting unauthorised immigration, traffic in spirits and women, and the sale of land. These prohibitions gave the Tahitians stronger ground from which to legislate the movements of the foreigner. The To'ohitu court had the sole responsibility of administering the law, yet where Europeans were involved, their decisions were more difficult to enforce (Newbury 1961: 333). Missionaries often interfered with this legislative process as they believed the "judges and chiefs were so merciless and inflexible in their interpretation and enforcement of the law" (Campbell 1992: 77). At the same time, missionaries and businessmen of Papeete

> … busied themselves collecting evidence for the courts, or giving advice to the Queen and the chiefs on how to modify the law.... Civil and religious affairs were not inseparable in the eyes of traders in the stocks, spirit vendors whose stores were confiscated, or Catholic missionaries who were deported or forbidden by law to preach. (Newbury 1961: 334)

Ships' captains often complained of mistreatment and misdealing, which fuelled a debate as to the powers of the throne. Did the monarchy have jurisdiction over foreigners—especially since it appeared that foreigners managed the monarchy?

Politics had changed. Pomare and the To'ohitu had realigned themselves to consolidate their power and now they saw that authority diminishing. Foreigners would sooner be "policed" by Tahitians, but resented all actions taken against them. The To'ohitu were unable to control the flagrant breeches of the law that ensued. The monarchy found itself "a subject for debate between

rival consuls and naval officers, and finally between rival European powers" (Newbury 1961: 334). It was during this period that George Pritchard became the adviser to the Queen.[11] This alliance was created by the necessity to work with foreign markets and representatives. She needed someone she could trust to interpret not only the language but also the movements of the foreigners. Pritchard spoke impeccable Tahitian; Pomare refused to speak English.

The alliance with Pritchard could be seen as an astute move on the part of Pomare. Linking herself with a man whom she considered to be the most powerful of the missionaries, she was able to more easily delegate authority over the foreign element. Yet this was a new "game", one about which she was uncertain. The authority and alacrity with which she manipulated the traditional system attests to her abilities, but this new game was different. Under the guise of "authority", issues of gender can easily be detected. Ralston (1992: 174-75) commented that:

> … for chiefly women who had exercised authority over certain resources and labour in precontact times, and who had figured prominently in societies where descent and inheritance were reckoned ambilineally, the changes must have been acute and rapid. For many they would have occurred in the early contact period before formal colonial rule was imposed. Foreign naval captains, explorers, traders and later colonial officials expected to deal with male rulers and traders, and when faced with questions of inheritance to power or property they placed greatest weight on male primogeniture.

Ships' captains did not want to interact with Pomare; they found her evasive, noncommittal, yet demanding. They also found her confidant, George Pritchard, unbearable because of his Christian ethics—ethics which Pomare appeared to uphold. Nevertheless homage was paid. This indignity was further acerbated when these men found that they shared their audience with the Queen and her child. This reinforced the bitter taste of showing obeisance to a woman and was reflected in the contempt many felt towards her. It was at this time that her reputation as a pawn or a woman of little brain came into being. Journal entries read as a caricature. On the one hand, Martin (1981: 59) wrote: "She looked every bit the Queen..., Poor woman! She seemed conscious that all this finery was out of character for she had not been five minutes in the cabin before she pitched her bonnet on the sofa and kicked off her shoes." Wilkes, on the other hand, alludes to her position (1852: 140): "The queen, however, contrives to rule in all matters that rightfully belong to her…", and Dumont D'Urville (Rosenman 1992: 147) described "an audience with Queen Pomare who did whatever Pritchard told her and, caught between the missionaries and the French warships, the poor little woman was out of her depth. She nursed her young baby throughout the interview".

Foreign officials were obliged to pay her homage even though they did not want to recognise her authority. The animosities that gender created were coupled with a very patronising attitude and created a difficult political situation for Pomare. To these officials she was a young girl, not a figure of authority. We have, therefore, a politically astute and powerful woman who was surrounded by and entrusted herself to men (Pritchard and her Tahitian advisors) in order to successfully regulate foreign intervention. Uncomfortable in this position, she attempted to reassert her dominion via the traditional status system—with titles linked to land. This fuelled the rivalry between herself and the To'ohitu chiefs, who dealt with issues of land tenure as well as the creation and implementation of Tahitian law. Pomare was involved in land disputes and "had made several attempts to assume the land titles of families that had died out, but she had been opposed by the To'ohitu" (Newbury 1980: 101).

It was at this time that she began to establish her own dynasty. Between 1835 and 1847 she gave birth to nine children: three died in infancy, another died at 17. Engrossed in producing potential heirs and with the settlement of land disputes, Pomare spent most of her time in Mo'orea, away from Tahiti. In her absence she placed her faith and trust in Pritchard and her Tahitian advisers. However, these absences allowed her adversaries an opportunity and they quickly took advantage of it. Status rivalry resulted in "difficulties posed by chiefs who resented her authority, and by traders and a consul who sought to embarrass her for their own political or commercial gain" (Campbell 1992: 77). The To'ohitu remained an irritation for Pomare as they continued to assert their ever-changing political positions.

THE FRENCH

Louis Antoine de Bougainville, captaining *L'Etoile* and *La Boudeuse*, dropped anchor off Tahiti on 6 April 1768. He proceeded to annex Tahiti for the French, but was made aware upon his return to France, that Wallis had already annexed it, in the name of King George IV, seven months before.[12] Tahiti enchanted Bougainville and his glowing and romantic descriptions were soon firmly lodged in the minds of the French. These descriptions, however, made it ever more difficult to accept the British as "owners" of the island. The Spanish, too, tried to lay claim to Tahiti on visits in 1772 and 1774. In 1774 two Catholic missionaries were left in the district of Tautira. It was most likely the problems they created for the Pomares that led to Pomare IV's decision to expel French Catholic missionaries 60 years later.

The politics of power and status remained crucial to Pomare's government. Her relationship with Pritchard continued to provoke a growing antagonism between herself and the To'ohitu on the one hand and foreign immigrants, especially French immigrants, on the other. In 1836 a crisis began with the

expulsion of three French nationals, two of them Catholic priests. They had entered Tahiti illegally and the To‘ohitu decided that they should be deported. Jacques Antoine Moerenhout, the French consul, a practising Catholic and adversary of Pritchard, played this event as both a national and religious issue. The chiefs had passed new port regulations in 1836 making all landings subject to the discretion of the Tahitian government (Newbury 1980: 93). However, when Admiral Dupetit-Thouars arrived in 1838 he demanded reparations for the expulsion of the Frenchmen. The following month Admiral Durmont D’Urville reprimanded Pomare for the actions of her government. She suggested that the priests would be welcomed, yet two months later Pomare and the To‘ohitu reinforced their position with a new law disallowing the teaching of Catholicism. Not knowing when a French man-o’-war might appear in her waters leaving Tahiti exposed to French intrigue and oppression, Pomare and her chiefs wrote to Queen Victoria asking for Her Majesty’s protection (Pritchard 1983: 58). Pritchard was the conveyor of this letter, and the hope was that he would return with the promise of protection.

Even though Pomare and the chiefs seemed firmly aligned, the chiefs still resented Pritchard’s influence. As such, Moerenhout took advantage of Pritchard’s absence to lure the To‘ohitu to his side. It was in this atmosphere of uncertainty and mistrust that Moerenhout was able to work for the downfall of Pomare’s government. He continued to gather evidence of mistreatment of French nationals. These involved a series of complaints by the French settlers about seizure of contraband spirits, prohibition of land sales and conduct of the *mutoi*; all were in essence complaints about the jurisdiction of the To‘ohitu, whose inability to control the police as well as secure a safe environment gave Moerenhout the upper-hand in his dealings with them. This led some of the senior chiefs to request assistance. Moerenhout drafted a letter to himself and coerced Tati, Utami, Hitoti and Paraita to sign it. It read:

> On account of the growth of evil in this land, among certain foreigners residing here, who are breaking our laws and Regulations of the land, who kill people and commit all manner of crimes, being protected by influential persons residing here as the Representatives of Countries where those crimes are punished [with] greater rigour than in ours—please send a war ship. (Pritchard 1983: 78)

With this in hand, as well as various French complaints, Moerenhout was in a strong position in 1842 when Dupetit-Thouars arrived.

In August 1842 Pomare was absent at Mo‘orea awaiting the birth of a child and Pritchard was in England. Moerenhout and the chiefs now had the opportunity to undermine Pomare’s government. Dupetit-Thouars had orders to create a “port of protection” for French commercial activities in the Pacific. He had tried to establish one in the Marquesas, but internal difficulties led

him to abandon that idea (Newbury 1980: 105-6). Tahiti, the opportunity at hand, was far too good to turn down. After meetings with Moerenhout and the chiefs, Dupetit-Thouars demanded compensation in the form of a bond of $10,000 within 48 hours. If this was not forthcoming then provisional occupation of the island would ensue; and if met with opposition hostilities would commence (Newbury 1980: 107).

Pomare was informed of the French demands, but never saw the complaint that substantiated it. In lieu of the money a "treaty" was signed asking for French "protection".[13] Pomare was coerced into signing. This unconscionable diplomatic coup has often been interpreted as a failure on the part of Pomare. In truth she was not able to counter French warships threatening hostilities, nor was she able to control (at this time) the chiefs, who had so often aligned themselves against her. She also did not understand Britain's reluctance to protect Tahiti. Nevertheless, she was not willing to give up. Dupetit-Thouars had left an acting commissioner and six marines to maintain France's position. Neither these men, nor Moerenhout, nor the chiefs were able to control Pomare; nor could they prevent her from flying a personal house flag quartered with a crown. Pomare became the ultimate frustration of the provisional government (Newbury 1980: 110).

ANNEXATION, WAR AND THE MONARCHY

Much of Tahitian history during the reign of Pomare IV can be seen as political gamesmanship. The same is true of the annexation of Tahiti. Campbell (1992: 72) noted that:

> A succession of crises in the late 'thirties over law enforcement, land ownership, trade regulations, and the residence of Catholic priests, finally brought a confrontation with the government of France in which neither the advice of missionaries, nor the structure of government inherited from Pomare II were of any use.

Pomare's ability to manipulate the traditional political system became increasingly ineffectual as Tahiti became a field of play in Anglo-French relations. Yet Pomare remained steadfast. She organised an assembly that in effect invalidated France's actions and secured "disavowals of their part of the affair [from Tati and Utami], blaming Moerenhout for the conspiracy" (Pritchard 1983). On his part, Moerenhout believed that he could intimidate Pomare with threats. On 18 January 1843 he wrote:

> Be it known to Your Majesty that your land is now in the enjoyment of peace, and you, as Queen of the land. I must inform you, that should the treaty, contracted between Your Majesty and the King of the French, be violated,

great evil will ensue. Think not that Great Britain and all the Nations can protect you from the anger of France. I say not this to frighten you, but as a friend I warn you... J.A. Moerenhout. (Pritchard 1983: 125-26)

These threats became fuel for Pomare, who truly believed that Victoria would come to her aid. Even though Pritchard returned with only empty prose, his indignation over what had transpired instilled a new vitality in Pomare. Pritchard wrote again to Queen Victoria stating that:

It is evident, beyond all doubt, that the Document, now called the *"Treaty" and* which four Chiefs and the Queen were obliged to sign, or lose their island, was not written by the Tahitians and presented to the French, soliciting their protection, but was written by the French and presented to the Tahitians simply for their signatures. Thus we see that the whole is a compound of falsehood and intrigue, intended to deceive the Nations of Europe, and to serve as a pretext for robbing a helpless Queen of her Sovereign rights, and enslaving Tahiti, under the name of a Naval Station, or a French Colony. (Pritchard 1983: 112)

This new flurry of correspondence created a renewed sense that Britain would insure the sovereignty of Tahiti.[14] Pritchard had correctly interpreted the actions of the French as "illegal", however this did not inspire the British to act on behalf of Tahiti. This constant stirring of emotions led to the expulsion of Pritchard from the islands and became the pretext for outright annexation when Dupetit-Thouars returned in November 1843 (Newbury 1980: 110).

Again Pomare held her ground. She refused to abandon her flag, which meant she refused to accept French sovereignty. Still, the tricolor was hoisted with fanfare; fanfare that muffled the verbal protest of Mare, Pomare's orator. In turn,

Pritchard struck his consular flag and took the queen into the consulate at news of annexation. On 8 November Bruat began his governorship installed in her house with full, if unratified, powers over both groups of islands, four ships of the line, and over a thousand men. (Newbury 1980: 114)

Bruat had seized Pomare's home and some of her lands and began to set up defensive positions. This seizure of Pomare's land and threats for more "was a most unpolitic measure at this time on Tahiti... it raised frightful apprehensions—created insurmountable aversions to the French, and induced all to assemble in arms against them" (Orsmond in Newbury 1980: 114). The expropriation of *ari'i lands* strengthened Tahiti's reserve and on 13 March 1844 armed opposition began.

The reshuffling of chiefly allegiance was not a political ploy. The issue had always been land, but now Tahitian sovereignty over their land was being

threatened. The political manoeuvres of the previous decade were about power and titles associated with land and the jurisdiction those titles allowed. The French were infringing upon Tahitian land tenure. It was the chiefs who provided the leadership and organisation of the fighting contingents. The abhorrence towards the French regarding the issue of land sequestration and the arbitrary imprisonment of Tahitians should not be viewed as support for Pomare. During the Tahitian-French War the assertion of political status, the shifting of allegiances, the playing of traditional politics continued. Pomare continued to position herself as a force, sometimes opposed to and sometimes supporting the other chiefs as legislators and leaders within a new political system.

With the establishment of a French Protectorate in 1847 came the reorganisation of Tahitian district and island administration. The running of the government was placed in the hands of Pomare and the To'ohitu and paid for by the French. Taxes and fines were no longer key to the running of the government. The administration, enriched by French funds, spent generously for services to the point where both high and low in Tahitian society had soon abandoned "all their pretended hatred of the French" (Newbury 1980: 124). This realignment with the French signalled the end of the historic political structure. Districts became divisions of the Tahitian polity, and their leaders were no longer seen as subordinate chiefs to the Pomare claim. However, status in relation to power did not die out so easily—the Queen and her family being afforded the paramount position within the institution of the monarchy.[15]

For Newbury, it is at this time that Pomare began her tenure as figurehead. However, she continued to maintain her interests and enhance her political position. Pomare supervised both the French administration and the To'ohitu, and she appealed to higher sources if she felt her position threatened. The politics of intrigue that she knew so well now surrounded appointments to the To'ohitu, church offices and the French administration. The To'ohitu remained firmly in Tahitian hands and Tahitian participation in church leadership became stronger. The new entity was French administration, an administration reliant upon foreign businessmen. As such, Pomare was able to secure her influence in a traditional manner through a network of relatives within the Salmon-Brander families (see Gossler 2005).

The paramountcy so established was financed by the French. In 1847 Pomare was given a stipend of 25,000 francs (while the Governor received 60,000 and the chiefs' 600). By the end of her reign this had increased to 37,000 francs. She also had income from leased lands that amounted to 50,000 francs. Working diligently through the system of land tenure, overseeing district land courts and the Tahitian Appeal Court, she expanded her title over

lands. She held title in 13 of Tahiti's districts and with these titles came the rights to land. In the early 1850s, the To'ohitu formally recognised Pomare's claims to other estates once held by Vaira'atoa, Ari'ipaea, and Teremoemoe.

In creating a dynasty Pomare did not allow the French administration to ignore or sidestep her position. She was more than a stipend and a palace; she was a factor to be reckoned with in local politics. Her tenacity included attempts at establishing a Pomare dynasty for both Tahiti and the Leeward group. Again she worked in a traditional manner, consolidating titles through marriage alliances and adoption. Her eldest daughter, Teri'imaevarua was adopted by her ex-husband Tapoa II of Bora Bora, where she became Queen in 1860. Her sons, Tamatoa, Teri'itapunui and Ari'iaue, were also placed in positions of power: Tamatoa was crowned King of Raiatea in 1857, Teri'itapunui was allocated the chiefly titles of Mahina and Ari'iaue took the title of Pomare V in 1877.[16] Both Pomare V and Tamatoa V lacked the political acumen of their mother, and unfortunately were addicted to alcohol. Tamatoa was deposed in 1871, and Pomare V became a political pawn offering Tahiti to the French in 1881. Pomare IV's dynastic ambitions crumbled, and at the end of her life she witnessed the dissolution of the chiefly power she had fought for her entire life.

"Queen Pomare was a tall, dignified-looking woman, without being handsome" (Hort 1891: 30). Two Mormon missionaries in 1874 found her careworn "but still straight as an arrow, and retaining all her faculties in perfection. She attended the fashionable round of balls and enjoyed cheating Admirals and ensigns at cards" (Newbury 1980: 195).

The 19th century was a time of monumental change. Pomare worked through these changes, evolving from a non-Christian youth to a very politically shrewd stateswoman. Her reign was mired in political conflict, opposition, intrigue and foreign intervention. She, however, maintained her position and "in a sense, personified her territory (in much the same way as the British monarch she admired personified her times)" (Newbury 1980: 195). Her death in 1877 left an air of uncertainty, and as Alexander Salmon noted:

> *Sous les fleurs de rhétorique de certaines des allocations prononcées, se décelait en réalité l'indice d'une sorte d'inquiétude parmi les chefs et jusque dans le peuple au sujet de l'avenir du pays après la disparition de la Reine*.[17]
> (E. Salmon 1964: 173)

Pomare IV was a figurehead, perhaps—the personification of her times, indeed. With her died a Tahitian monarchy, Tahitian jurisdiction over land, and the stature of the traditional system of leadership as manifest in the *ari'i.*

NOTES

1. There is no record of the birth of ʻAimata. Most sources suggest 1813 probably based on a missionary belief that she was approximately seven to ten years old in 1820.
2. See Gunson (1964), Newbury (1961, 1980), Oliver (1974), Stevenson (1981, 1988).
3. "She is the illegitimate daughter of Pomare II by a woman the missionaries modestly designated the extra wife of the king" (my translation).
4. With the battle of Fei Pi in 1815, Pomare II consolidated his position and claimed the title of "King". Even though a "monarchy" had been established, "the outward appearance of a Polynesian Christian 'kingdom' bore little resemblance to the realities..." (Newbury 1980: 59).
5. Pomare II had aligned himself with the missionaries as a means of consolidating his position and power. His detractors commented "he never attended but one service a day, and to that he came at a late time" (Orsmond in Newbury 1961: 349).
6. Even though ʻAimata was clearly of high status and rank, her titles did not give her access to the *marae* and the ability to wear the *maro ʻura* (Gunson 1964, Langevin-Duval 1979). Her marriage to Tapoa gave her access through him to the *marae*, thereby strengthening the Pomare ascendancy and ideally giving their children like chiefly privileges without interference. This manoeuvre demonstrates Pomare II's tie to the traditional status system even though he was responsible for the acceptance of Christianity.
7. Tahitian names were related to titles and land. Here, Teriʻitaria was the wife of Pomare II and Pomare IV's mother's sister. Above Teriʻitaria was the name/title given to the son of Pomare II who became Pomare III.
8. This of course being a term used by the missionaries. Many who wished to consolidate traditional rank and status used tattoo as a means of demonstrating their intentions. The missionaries saw this as reverting to past ways.
9. This was a code of laws drafted by the missionaries in consultation with Pomare II. The Code provided protection of life and property, observance of the Sabbath, sanctity of marriage, a legislature, and the abolition of some customary practices—such as tattoo and dance, and the offering of tribute.
10. Under the Pomare Code of 1819, chiefs were appointed judges to apply the Laws of the Code. The Toʻohitu was a judicial body of seven chiefs which constituted a High Court. The chiefs who made up the Toʻohitu had been district *ariʻi* within the traditional political system.
11. From the mid 1810s the missionaries expanded their role to include entrepreneur and advisor. These activities supported both the mission and the missionaries (see Newbury 1961, 1980).
12. Wallis arrived in Tahiti on 19 June 1767 and departed on 27 July 1767.
13. The "Declaration" as translated by Samuel Wilson on 8 September 1842:

    To the Admiral Du Petit-Thouars

    Because we cannot govern our government in the present circumstances so as to harmonise with Foreign Governments; and lest our land and our government and our liberty become another's, we whose names are written

underneath—the Queen and the High Chiefs of Tahiti write to you asking that the King of the French protect us.

Here are the conditions of this agreement.

1) That the name of the Queen and the Government of the Queen and the government of the high Chiefs and their authority may remain upon them and upon their people.

2) All laws and regulations in the government established shall be made in the name of the Queen and her name signed underneath.

3) The Queen and all the people shall keep possession of their lands. Land disputes are to be left to themselves. Foreigners shall not interfere with them.

4) The people shall be left to regard God according to their own desire.

5) The Churches of the British Missionaries now existing, shall be left unmolested and the British Missionaries still discharge their functions. It is the same with all other people, they shall not be molested in their thought towards God.

Upon these conditions, if agreeable, do the Queen and the high Chiefs ask the King of the French for protection. All affairs relative to foreign Governments and concerning Foreigners resident at Tahiti shall be with the French Government and the person put in authority by said Government with the advice of her authorities—such as Port Regulations, etc Etc. And do all the functions to establish harmony and peace. (Newbury 1980: 107-8)

14. Included in this correspondence was Pomare's reason for signing the treaty. She wrote:

    This is why I wrote my name, it was on account of my horror at blood being shed, and losing my Government. 5000 dollars were demanded the first day, and 5000 more on the second, or they would seize my little island, Motu-uta, and all Tahiti. Another reason for writing my name was; 'If the French Admiral were to fire upon the town, the lives of the British, American and French residents would be sacrificed'. (Pritchard 1983: 123)

15. The rivalry between the Pomare line and those descendent from the other chiefs continues today. With some of these claims comes a relationship to land which is even more problematic today due to growing populations. Many from the Tati line allege that the Pomares usurped the throne. All in all, these amount to proclamations of status, as claims no longer have a relation to power or financial gain.
16. Of her six children by Ari'ifa'aite, three had died by 1855 and Joinvile died 1875. Even though her children were in place they played little part in island politics. Ari'iaue or Pomare V married into the royal house of Huahine in 1857 but divorced in 1861. Pomare IV tried again to consolidate titles and arranged his marriage to Marau, the youngest of the Teva/Salmon line in 1875. For more information concerning the Pomare dynasty, see Henry (1928), Newbury (1980, 1988), Oliver (1974) and Stevenson (1981).
17. Under the guise of rhetoric it was revealed that the subject of the future after the death of the Queen caused a sort of restlessness among the chiefs and all the way down to the people (my translation).

ABSTRACT

Queen ‘Aimata Pomare IV was monarch of Tahiti for 50 years (1827-77). Her reign was a time of monumental change in Tahiti. During this time Christianity became commonplace, *ari‘i* ‘chiefs’ in the traditional political system became legislators in a European political system and Tahiti became French. Pomare IV worked through these changes, evolving from a non-Christian youth to a very politically shrewd stateswoman. This essay examines her life and her reign which was was mired in political conflict, opposition, intrigue and foreign intervention.

Keywords: Tahiti, Queen Pomare/Pomare IV, British missionisation, French colonialism, To‘ohitu

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EMMA AND PHEBE: “WEAVERS OF THE BORDER”

TOEOLESULUSULU DAMON SALESA
University of Auckland

Figure 1. Studio photograph of Queen Emma taken about 1894.
Figure 2. Mrs Parkinson today (probably 1930s).

Few Polynesian sisters have led lives quite as remarkable as Emma Coe (1850-1913) and Phebe Coe (1863-1944). Born in Samoa to an American father and a Samoan mother, raised in Samoa, the sisters went on to live much of their lives in Melanesia—mostly in northern New Guinea—where they had lasting impact in business, society and settlement. Polynesian women in Melanesia, women in realms that were almost exclusively male, of mixed ancestry in a time seemingly obsessed with purity, there was much about them and their lives that was truly extraordinary. Little wonder that they both achieved levels of fame or notoriety. Phebe achieved local prominence: becoming known in northern New Guinea as “Miti”, a linguist, collector, cultural broker, trader and planter. Emma was famous throughout the region: perhaps the most prominent woman in Melanesia of her time, becoming famed (or notorious)

as "Queen Emma", a wealthy businesswoman and planter, who developed an exclusive and powerful social circle, and shaped enterprise and government.

From the 1880s until their deaths, many foreigners who visited northern New Guinea heard of, or met, Emma and Phebe. Their public personas of Queen Emma and Miti reveal much about the gendered and racialised worlds the two sisters inhabited. Among European and colonial women of their time it was expected that women would make their lives in domestic and private realms; both Phebe and Emma ventured far beyond, making lives in public and commercial arenas, and doing so with prominence. They were women whose ancestry and skin marked them as different, as being unlike both "Europeans"—in whose company they made their money and reputation—while also being unlike the "natives"—whether in Samoa or New Guinea—upon whose lands and labour their wealth and position depended. If their lives were partly about coming to advantageous terms with these complexities, their public personas were about reducing this complexity to simple terms digestible in a time when their achievements ran in the face of so much expectation.

Prevailing colonial understandings about respectability and whiteness appeared to exclude the sisters, so it was remarkable that Phebe and Emma managed—largely through their own efforts—to make claims on both. By the turn of the 20th century, Emma's central position in the developing colonial society of New Guinea, and Phebe's place as an important nexus for commercial and ethnographic knowledge, appeared to have secured not only wealth and advantage, but both respectability and "whiteness". Visiting observers had little trouble in describing them with respectable and inclusive terms, and for most the sisters' claim on being "ladies"—a position not only of gender, but of race and class—was relatively secure. But sitting underneath this apparent security were deeper insecurities made fertile by the sisters' differences. Commerce posed risks for women whose reputations were supposed to be built on domestic and family grounds; and respectability was not something that could be simply purchased, even with the wealth and social accoutrements the sisters could command. Phebe would learn just how fickle these things might prove. Ladies they may have become, but usually in a modified or contingent way—"half-caste Samoan ladies" (Cayley-Webster 1898: 75).

THE EARLY LIVES OF SISTERS

Emma Eliza Coe was born in Apia in Samoa on 26 September 1850. She was her parents' second child, and was a teenager by the time her youngest sister was born. That youngest sister, Phebe Clotilda Coe, was the last of eight children and was born on 5 June 1863. These two Coe sisters were

both children of the mixed community at Apia, "the Beach" as it was called, a community made up of foreigners from throughout the Pacific and the world, as well as Samoans from neighbouring villages and the rest of Samoa. Apia changed considerably in the 13 years between their births. It had grown into a commercial *entrepôt*, with a number of shore traders and some major regional business concerns. When Emma was born in 1850 the foreshore of Apia Harbour was dotted mainly with Samoan villages; by the time Phebe was born much of it, from Sogi in the west to Matautu in the east (where the Coes lived), had been occupied. It was an innovated community, built out of Samoan ways and materials and the things that came over the sea in ships. Some of the neighbours were Samoans, living in traditional *fale* 'houses'; another was the notorious seaman "Bully" Hayes (Westbrook MS-Papers-0061-072). The sisters were born into a Samoa at a time where a distinctive kind of change was fast occurring, at the place where it was most intense (Gilson 1970: 162-87, Salesa 1997: Ch. 3).

The Coe sisters' early lives were dominated by their *'āiga*, their families. Both their mother and father came from families with some wealth and status, though of very different kinds. Their mother, Leutu (Joanna or Ioana) Taletale, was a cousin of Malietoa Laupepa, who from mid-century onwards became a key figure in Samoan politics (for a time, 1881-87, recognised as "King" of Samoa). The family to which Laupepa belonged, Sā Malietoa, was one of the great ancestral lineages of Samoa in the 19th century (Krämer 1994 [1]: 310-21). The sisters' American father was Jonas Myndersse Coe. Jonas was living in Samoa from at least 1846.[1] He then began a prominent career on the fringes of a burgeoning Apia, as trader, small scale planter, sometime foreign official and all round opportunist. Both parents were able to provide advantages that were not shared by most of the children of Apia or Samoa, which put the sisters in a position unusual at the time.

Jonas and Ioana had eight children together. The eldest was Maria Miller, then there was Emma, followed by Edward Henry, Mary Ann (who died as a toddler), William Pritchard, John, Ann Murray (who died as an infant), with the youngest being Phebe. In addition to these eight were the children Jonas had with two other mothers. Of these half-brothers and -sisters, there were at least another ten.[2] After discovering his involvement with another woman, Ioana left Jonas while she was pregnant with Phebe, returning to her family at Falealili. But Phebe's older brother was sent to bring her back to Apia before she was in her teens. There, Jonas' second wife did not treat Phebe well, and while she counted her half sisters as her "true sisters", she longed to be with her mother rather than with "that other family" (Mead and Parkinson, MS. 26 June 1929: 3). In Phebe's account Jonas was also very severe, imposing strict rules, manners and habits, and keeping a very

orderly house (a bungalow imported from the United States). The return of her older sister Emma from overseas made a huge difference in Phebe's life. "I used to sit beside [Emma] and watch every little thing she did", Phebe later remembered, "I loved her very much and… I was very lonely without her" (Mead and Parkinson, MS. 4 July 1929: 1).

In Apia, as in other colonies, respectable *papālagi* men went to great lengths to try to secure advantage and opportunity for their children and families. The frontier imperialism of Samoa foreshadowed the deep inequalities of colonialism, and instructed how vulnerable some Samoan claims might be in the face of imperial or colonial interventions. At stake were more than just appearances: it was about the very real benefits that accompanied recognition as a foreigner. With United States citizenship, for instance, concrete rights and benefits could be coherently transmitted. These benefits ranged from the ownership of property, rights of residence and protection, to formal connections to government and state that were denied non-citizens. But these benefits were bound up in ideas about race, civilisation and culture, and were not thought of as separate. Jonas made great efforts to secure both the letter and the spirit of these benefits for his children, and to position them advantageously in the elite foreign circles of Apia. He wished his children to speak English (as well as Samoan), to dress according to middle-class American norms and to conform to American mores. His children were not allowed to attend parties with mixed race couples, unless they had been officially married. It was a severe upbringing according to their "father's set of narrow rigid standards", where a very different kind of life—a wholly Samoan life—could essentially be seen from the window (Parkinson and Mead, MS. 28 June 1929: 9). Jonas made it clear he did not want his children to marry Samoans. Phebe remembered him saying to Samoans who asked after her and her sisters "what do you think that I take all this trouble to bring up my children and then let them marry Samoans and become Samoans again" (Mead and Parkinson, MS. 26 June 1929: 4).

Jonas made great efforts to secure respectability and connection for his children through education. All of the Coe children were educated in ways that enhanced their ability to secure *papālagi* culture, language, connection and advantage. Most children in Samoa were going to schools run by "native teachers" trained by European missionaries or in mission institutes. This schooling was largely integrated into village life, and taught in Samoan, not English. These were not the kinds of schools that did the work Jonas desired: the Coe children were educated away from Samoans, Samoan village schools and their limited missionary curriculum. The Coe children also avoided the dominant missionary influence in Samoa, the London Missionary Society, even though they provided schools specifically for white and half-caste

children (Salesa 1997: Ch. 2). Emma's schooling was given instead to the new Catholic convent at Apia, though neither mother nor father were Catholic. Emma was then sent overseas for schooling, a privilege reserved for very few local children—mostly the children of *papālagi* missionaries and high-ranking officials. Emma attended school at the Subiaco Convent in Parramatta, Sydney (from 1860 to 1864), and then went on to school in San Francisco (about 1864 to 1869). Younger sister Phebe had a Catholic education too, though hers was entirely at the local convent—after which she remained a lifelong Catholic (Mead 1960: 186). Emma's education was a measure of just how substantial and defining such educational opportunities might be, and these shaped not only her abilities and her potential, but her sentiments, tastes and ambitions. While still at high school Emma had seen more of the world than almost any other Samoan young person.

The world the sisters inhabited was not just culturally rich, but socially complex. Much as their father desired them to be removed from (and imagined they would be above) a Samoan milieu, as young people they desired to be part of it. When they spent time with their mother or when their father was working they would often break their father's strictures, dressing in *'ie lavalava* 'Samoan-style wrap-around dress', putting flowers in their hair, swimming and spending time with their Samoan relatives, imagining themselves like other Samoan young people. Once, inspired by the Samoan examples around her, Phebe even gave herself a home-made tattoo on her legs, using needles and charcoal, like the *malu* 'women's tattoo from the knee to upper thigh'. Her father later discovered the tattoo when she was recovering from an injury: "Oh, he was wild. He said if you were not sick with that foot you would have a horse whipping" (Parkinson and Mead, MS. 4 July 1929: 1). But exclusivity sometimes ran both ways. "Samoans are very proud and look down on the halfe [sic] castes too", Phebe recalled. She remembered times when Samoans had snubbed half-castes, refusing to consider them for high ranking titles: "They said, what give our high Samoan name to someone who has European blood, and is not even a pure Samoan" (Parkinson and Mead, MS. 26 June 1929: 4). Both sisters seemed to share a kind of life choice that Phebe later described: "I decided to stay on [with my father] and learn European ways and marry as my father wished" (Parkinson and Mead, MS. 26 June 1929: 4).

Indeed, not long after Emma had returned from San Francisco, in October 1869, she married James Forsayth. Forsayth was a 22-year-old trader who had come from New Zealand and owned his own schooner. Emma's marriage to a respectable *papālagi* secured many things valued in Emma's upbringing, and the marriage was duly recorded in official records. (Jonas Coe was at that time the American representative or "Commercial Agent" at Apia.) Marriages served as public tokens of intimate arrangements, and for foreign governments

were a key moment when government and law defined peoples' domestic lives. As a woman, foreign citizenship or subjecthood was established or endorsed through a husband, and benefits extended to both wives and, potentially, children. Official marriages legitimated not only a relationship, but also a spouse and children, bringing them within the vision of the state, and in many ways governing their property and even their selves. Emma's marriage was more than just this, of course, and soon thereafter Emma was pregnant, with a girl, Amy, who did not live long. Later, in 1872, she gave birth to her oldest son. He was named Jonas Myndersse Coe Forsayth after his maternal grandfather.[3]

Phebe was only seven when Emma married, and Samoa at the time—Apia in particular—was teetering on the edge of conflict. Part of this was a familiar Samoan tension, between the great Samoan lineages; but foreign ambitions and interference had grown these tensions to dangerous levels. Spending a few months in Samoa seemed to inflate *papālagi* ambition, and simultaneously decay their judgement and sense of proportion. The empires most interested in Samoa—Germany, Britain and the USA—each wanted a Samoan leadership that favoured them and their own interests. Samoan disputes were cultivated and exploited, and foreign interventions destabilised and disrupted Samoan efforts to produce a durable political settlement. Apia was by then a commercial hub. Samoa was a source of coconut oil and the coconut oil industry required land, ships, labour and a harbour. With Apia as its main Pacific base the Hamburg firm, Godeffroy und Sohn, had come to dominate the central Pacific trade. Apia hosted official representatives from each of the interested empires, and warships—the instruments of intervention—visited periodically. By the 1870s a complex tragedy of foreign interventions and Samoan political rivalries was underway which was to last 30 years.

This Samoan and imperial political drama is not easy to describe compactly: but it was a drama with which the Coe family was intimately connected. The first connection was through the Coe's Malietoa relations, *'āiga* to Emma and Phebe through their mother. In a key period that both the girls experienced, the Sā Malietoa 'the Malietoa lineage' was itself in conflict, as rival successors (Talavou and Laupepa) went to war to cement their claim (1869-72). The second connection was through Jonas and Emma's personal relations with a "Special Agent" sent out from the United States, Colonel Albert Steinberger. Jonas became involved with Steinberger politically; Emma was involved with him intimately (her husband, James Forsayth had earlier died). After his initial visit Steinberger wrote a report, and then went back to the US. Emma remained a correspondent of Steinberger's, and soon after went on to spend time with him in the US. When Steinberger returned to Samoa in 1875, he was appointed as Premier by Malietoa Laupepa's

Samoan government, but this elevation had rested on an intricate complex of double dealings, particularly among German and American commercial and political interests.[4] Emma and Jonas had closely associated themselves with Steinberger, and this association was soon risky. Steinberger lasted less than a year as Premier, before an alliance of foreigners pressured Malietoa Laupepa to arrest him. Joining him in lockup was Jonas, and both were deported by a British warship to Fiji, then New Zealand.

Jonas was soon back, but Steinberger never returned. The troubles in Samoa had seen an increase in land sales, more foreign interventions and increasing instability. Jonas had himself played a part in this, successfully finding opportunity in this time of upheaval and war. Phebe recalled how "my father gave the chiefs ammunition and guns and then when they could not pay they had to give him their lands" (Mead and Parkinson, MS. 26 June 1929: 3). It was an unfortunately common practice, and proved profitable. But, as Jonas' deportation had taught him, the war also had deep costs. Not least was stability, as rumours seemed to have Samoa being annexed by the United States one week, Britain or Germany the next. Malietoa Laupepa's complicity with Steinberger's removal had forced him to retire from Apia, his influence in retreat. Apia trade was increasingly cornered by the huge firm of Godeffroys, and the US star that seemed to rise with Steinberger, now sat much lower. It was at this juncture that Emma left Apia, and soon after left Samoa. Emma left with the Australian Thomas Farrell, who would be her new domestic and business partner.

THE LADIES AS COLONISERS.

By the time Emma arrived to settle at Mioko, on the Duke of York Islands off the coast of New Guinea, she had become the common law wife of Thomas Farrell. Farrell was an Australian sailor, trader and entrepreneur, and together they began as traders for the Apia-based Goddefroy und Sohn, but very soon they set up their own trading enterprise. They both already knew that island trading could be a lucrative business, though it was risky and difficult work. Farrell brought not only important trading and sailing experience to his partnership with Emma, but also a poor reputation (see for example, Danks 1933: 123-24, 155, 157-58). Farrell was accused of leaving traders ill-equipped and with little support, and of keeping his traders in debt to him. One trader described how Farrell went even further, and forced him and his father to sign on at "the point of a revolver, we [were] threatened by a man who was not better than a pirate" (Mouton 1974: 70).

Both Farrell and Emma proved not only to be entrepreneurs, but opportunists. The most bizarre of these opportunities came after a disastrous plan to form a colony of settlement on the island of New Ireland, an island

neighbouring Farrell and Emma's main base on New Britain. The brainchild of Charles Bonaventure du Breuil, a French nobleman who styled himself the Marquis de Rays, du Breuil inspired—or perhaps more accurately, deluded—investors and colonists into supporting his plans for a New France on New Ireland (Niau 1936).[5] Between 1879 and 1881 over 700 people emigrated from France, Italy, Germany and Belgium to the first colony at Port Breton (the renamed Port Praslin). About one half died on the voyage out or soon after they arrived. Even hefty financial backing could not rescue the plans. The unfortunate survivors were starving and malarial, left to struggle on without the "wisdom" of the Marquis de Rays, who had stayed in Europe. Everywhere the plans reeked of a European short-sightedness: the site of settlement was poorly chosen, the settlers were inappropriately equipped—there were over 100,000 bricks for a cathedral and hundreds of dogs' collars, while medical supplies were inadequate. The settlers were thrown at the mercy of the elements, the local communities, and the missionaries and traders in the region.

By February 1882 the last 40 colonists remaining at Port Breton were helped off by Thomas Farrell. Thomas and Emma negotiated with the colonists and funded their evacuation in exchange for goods and one of the steamships. There is a story that as the ship came into harbour near Ralum, the starving and ill colonists could hear Emma at the piano playing "The Blue Danube" (Niau 1936: 157). Only a dozen of these survivors stayed on in New Guinea (some going to work for the Farrells) while about 200 went on to New South Wales and Queensland. The Farrells showed decency in giving aid to the pitiful colonists, but the vessel and goods they gained moderated any claim of altruism. This ambivalence was noticed by a later visitor to their house, who observed the cannon taken from the settlement out front and one of New France's flags flying on the verandah. Inside the dining room was the colony's altar, which had supposedly been consecrated by the Archbishop of Milan. "It was a magnificent work of art, beautifully inlaid... used for the purposes of a sideboard, and was stocked with wines and spirits" (Rannie 1912: 284). Yet even this brashness paled beside rumours that Thomas and Emma had poisoned one of New France's autocratic—and possibly crazed—leaders.[6]

Sister Phebe arrived in New Guinea as the de Rays' debacle was mostly played out. She had recently married Richard Parkinson, a much older German, in a marriage her father approved but which she had been unsure of. Their mother, Ioana, had moved in with Phebe, as had Emma's son Coe Forsayth and a number of *'āiga*. Richard was keen to move to New Guinea—he was a naturalist and ethnographer and imagined riches of that kind—but Phebe needed persuading. The bond between sisters won out: "… it was only because I loved [Emma] so that my husband and Farrel[l] succeeded in

persuading me to come up here [to New Guinea]. That was the root of their winning" (Mead and Parkinson, MS. 4 July 1929: 1). The Parkinsons did not travel alone. Phebe had already had her first child, and she also brought her mother, as well as a large proportion of their household. Polynesians abroad, these Samoans were effectively colonists.

Emma and Thomas Farrell had secured an important foothold on the Gazelle Peninsula in New Britain and had started building their headquarters at Ralum. With Phebe and Richard's arrival it was obvious how the domestic and personal were intimately connected. Thomas died a few years after Phebe arrived, in 1886, and Emma returned to her previous name of Emma Forsayth, and the business changed name to E.E. Forsayth & Co. By this time it was already a substantial enterprise, with trading posts and plantations throughout German New Guinea and even a few beyond. Ralum was the centre of all this; "a splendid plantation" run entirely by Mrs Forsayth. In the context of the times, such achievements, by a woman and not a white one at that, often stunned onlookers: "She does all the correspondence, keeps the accounts, and personally superintends the work of the plantation. Of course she still has a manager… but she still believes in having an eye over all" (Pitcairn 1891: 172, 184). As one English gentlemen remarked upon meeting her:

> In these days of militant feminism, it is interesting to bring before the readers of these pages the fact that here in these remote regions a woman's tact, skill, capacity and endurance have achieved commercially, more than any of her masculine fellow-traders. (Pullen-Burry 1909: 110)

E.E. Forsayth & Co. would be a major force in the region for nearly a quarter of a century.

About this time Emma was becoming known, increasingly, as "Queen Emma". Not only was Emma a commercial power, the name seemed appropriate for such a "handsome and very striking figure" whose "whole carriage was queenly" (Rannie 1912: 283). The name stuck. Her business acumen had made the business breathtakingly successful. "As a business woman," one settler observed, "she was as keen as a razor" (Hansen 1925: 1). Meantime Phebe was forging her own public character. She was becoming known as "Miti", Pidgin English for Mrs, and had learned useful local languages (including both German and some Kuanua, the language of the Tolai).

The arrival of the Parkinsons signalled the beginning of an expansionist phase of what was to be Queen Emma's realm. Richard Parkinson was destined to become a well known botanist and ethnographer, and his expertise in tropical agriculture was a boost to Queen Emma's coconut planting programme, which in 1882-83 was the first sustained effort in the

northern New Guinea region.[7] Meantime Phebe was proving herself a capable plantation manager and an able recruiter of local labour. Richard and Emma set about buying land, and huge tracts were "acquired"—often in ways that were questionable (Pullen-Burry 1909: 115-16). Richard's endeavours "laid the foundation of Emma's wealth. He bought hundreds of acres of land from the natives for a mere song and planted coconuts, cotton, [and] broom corn" (Goedicke 1952: 66; see also 1941: 39). The change was rapid: one onlooker mused in 1898 that in a place where only 20 years before "not a white man could exist", he now "drove in a pony phaeton through [Emma's] plantation alone for four hours without seeing the whole of it" (*Maitland Weekly Mercury*, 1898). He estimated that the coconut trees numbered in the hundreds of thousands.

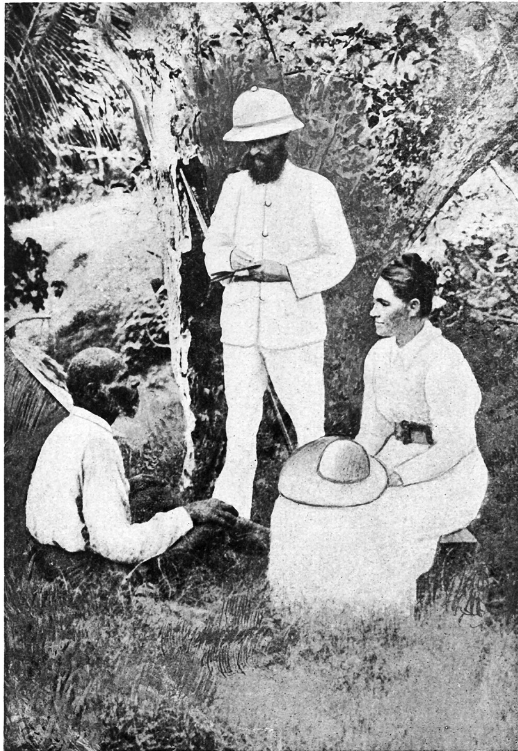
The lands were the foundation of the sisters' wealth, but it was wealth that could only be realised if people could be made to work the land cheaply. Emma and Phebe's plantations relied on hundreds of labourers recruited from throughout New Guinea and the Solomons—mostly from Buka and Bougainville. Loss of land, exploitation of local workers, the arrival of so many foreigners, the development of New Ireland into a colonial centre, also weighed deeply on local peoples. Pressure increased further as the plantations continued to expand, encroaching further on the islanders' villages. Despite repeated complaints to German authorities by local islanders, these had little effect, as Emma worked to have her claims recognised by the colonial administration. The outcome for local people was poor. Some Tolai still remember Emma, figuratively, as someone who seduced away Tolai lands asserting: "… that both Queen Emma and the big men prostituted themselves—the former by selling her body, the latter by selling their land" (Neumann 1992: 232).

Phebe was emerging as a key element in her sister's plantation business. Her husband went to work for others, and to start a plantation of their own, but Emma asked Phebe to stay on as plantation manager. Phebe had already established strong links with local leaders and communities. Since her arrival she had shown herself able to handle the many challenges of planting and securing workers.

> In the early days [1883-4] I used to take my baby and go up into the bush on Sunday[s]. I had to take Nellie [her second daughter, Helene] because she was a baby still at the breast. But I had to go because I wanted to see how the natives lived. I took a boy to carry the baby and six boys with Snyder rifles and I took my Winchester and so we went up.... I used to come back laden with presents of sugar cane and taros. Later that was very helpful to my husband when we had trouble with the natives or he wanted to find a special native, he would ask… and then I would tell him. (Parkinson and Mead, MS. 3 July 1929)

This was Phebe's approach, and was a major reason why so many people thought her remarkable. While not excepted from the kind of racial thinking then pervasive about Melanesians, Phebe had an unusual willingess to live and work with, and to respect local peoples, and an unusual interest in what these peoples thought, said and did.

By the 1890s Phebe had an established reputation as a cultural expert, artefact collector, advisor and translator in northern New Guinea. The research for Richard Parkinson's (1907) enormously successful book, *Dreßig Jahre in der Südsee (Thirty Years in the South Seas)* hinged on Phebe as she could speak Pidgin (Richard could not) and had some facility in other local



MRS. PARKINSON TRANSLATES THE OLD CANNIBAL'S STORY FOR HER HUSBAND

Figure 3.

languages. Visiting anthropologists, travellers and voyagers also had Phebe show them around. Margaret Mead even used Phebe (controversially) as an informant on Samoan society, though she had been away from Samoa for over 40 years, and had spent very little time in Samoan villages when she was there (Freeman 1983: 251-52; but compare, Mead 1977: 62; Overell 1923: 44; Pullen-Burry 1909: 48, 84, 89-90).

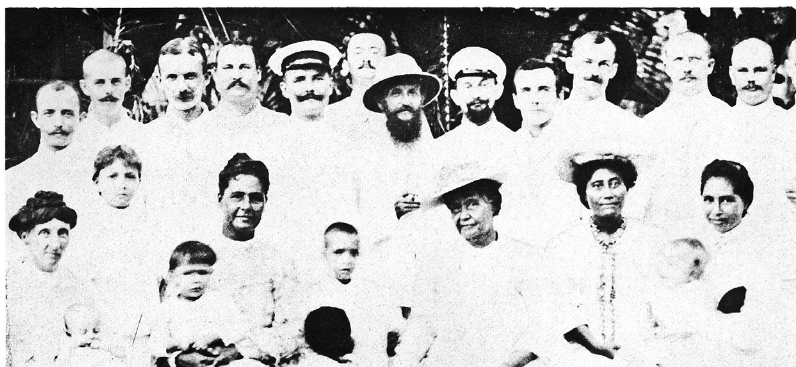
The kind of cultural and knowledge work that Phebe did dovetailed with her work as a labour recruiter and plantation manager. Her husband Richard was enormously interested in the natural and cultural worlds that surrounded them, but by the later 1890s was increasingly unwell and weak, and dependent on Phebe for the legwork and cultural and linguistic expertise that made his scholarly work possible. Richard had become well known as a collector of New Guinea material culture, and had gathered an impressive network of correspondents, dealers and museums. But much of the labour behind this was Phebe's. She combined recruiting trips with collecting, and seemed to gear her collecting to the market, whereas her husband used collection more to cement his reputation as a scientist. (Richard had earlier sold thousands of objects to museums in partnership with the profit-driven Thomas Farrell). Phebe carefully selected and described pieces, and they are to be found in museums throughout Australasia, Europe and America, from Sydney to Leipzig to Oxford (Knowles, Gosden and Lienert 2000: 43-44). Phebe received little recognition of her work, largely because she did not pen the correspondence—Richard "did not acknowledge the contributions of his wife" (Specht 2000: 29). This was par for the course at the time, when women's contribution in traditional male spheres was often hidden or unacknowledged. But as Phebe's work after her husband's death was to show, she was perfectly able to collect and circulate artefacts on her own.

Emma's work was far more obvious than Phebe's, and nowhere was it more obvious than in the establishment of Queen Emma's "court". As both Emma and the Parkinson's businesses grew wealthy, the social orbit that revolved around Ralum became more opulent. In its context the homestead at Gunantambu, a half mile buggy ride from the warehouses and offices at Ralum, was palatial. Family gatherings with friends at Gunantambu transmutated into "society". One observer was enchanted:

> the neatly-trimmed lawns and summer house compare favourably with pleasure-gardens of the kind in Europe. Here Queen Emma presided over her little court, and very smart were some of the gay muslins worn by the planters' wives... whilst the gentlemen present were clad in those white suits which are so suitable for tropical wear. The programme commenced with the dancing of New Ireland 'boys', who were to be followed by the kanakas of the Gazelle [Peninsula]. (Pullen-Burry 1909: 201-2)

Foreigners languidly remembered the "songs, both German and English; solos, duets, trios and quartettes". These songs would often by complemented by Samoan music, dance and food (Pitcairn 1891: 172, 184). It was a mannered, even snobbish society, but also a theatre of domination, where island men were "boys", island women were servants, and the privileges of the half-caste Samoan ladies were not only etched onto the land, but into performances and domestic life. The Queen's court was explicitly political and economic—the American consul, for instance, lived within the Gunantambu grounds. The siblings, relatives and offsiders that had been brought from Samoa often cemented relationships with traders or other petty operatives around Emma; an intimate relationship with one of the Queen's companions often implied a relationship in other ways (Mouton 1974: 118n, 135 & n). Both sisters were integral, but it was the elder one that presided as Queen over that "human menagerie" (Pullen-Burry 1909: 201-3).

As might be expected though, not everyone admired or even liked this exclusive and influential social set. Octave Mouton, a Belgian planter and trader, was among those excluded (Biskup 1974: 6). To Mouton it was painfully apparent how the court wielded both political and social influence. After a disagreement with the Farrells he felt that he and his father would not be heard by German naval officers, for the Farrells "explained [the] matter in a different way, together with [a] champagne dinner to wash it [down], [so] there was no chance [for us] to have justice" (Mouton 1974: 75). Others



GROUP OF FRIENDS AND RELATIONS, AT GUNANTAMBU, ABOUT 1895

Women, sitting: Mrs. Mirow; Mrs. Phoebe Parkinson (nursing child); Queen Emma (centre, wearing large hat); Mrs. Calder (family later connected with Mortlock Islands); Mrs. Schultze (daughter of Willie P. Coe, Emma's brother).

Men, standing at back, left to right: —; Muller; —; Dr. Wuchert; Paul Kolbe (wearing cap); Mainka; R. H. R. Parkinson (wearing helmet) —famous scientist and writer, who married Phoebe Coe (Queen Emma's sister); —; Bradke; Diercke; E. Timms, manager of Hernsheims; —.

Figure 4.

were much more acerbic, like Count Rodolphe Festetics De Tolna, who blamed Emma for his run-in with the colonial government and called her his “persecutor”. He was not convinced of the suitability of Emma’s queenly title.[8]

Phebe was never as comfortable as her sister within this exclusive and influential circle. Phebe was connected and satisfied with local islanders in ways her sister never was, and never quite at ease with Emma’s new status and nickname. Emma’s house, Phebe commented, “was very near to ours but some times I did not go over there for months” (Mead and Parkinson, MS. 27 June 1929: 7). Phebe explained it partly through her busy-ness, but also through her preference for people and work life. Phebe’s home was open to a more diverse group of peoples. She welcomed Melanesian women and children into her home and raised many children who were not her own—mixed race children, and those without a home to go to. Moreover, Phebe had not enjoyed the strictures of respectability for women in society when she had visited Sydney, and it was these mores on which the Queen’s court drew. But there was perhaps more. On another occasion, while in Sydney, Phebe discovered that her relatives living in New Guinea were being called “princesses” when they visited Sydney: “Oh, I said, very much disgusted, they are just my niece and my nephew’s wife they are no princesses, my sister is no queen, that is just the name which the people give her in the islands because she is good to them all” (Mead and Parkinson, MS. 6 July 1929: 1).

The Ralum court was set within an expanding German empire. The northern side of New Guinea, where Emma and Phebe lived, had become increasingly German, and this culminated in the annexation of northern New Guinea in 1884. For most of the remainder of the century German New Guinea was run by the officially sanctioned New Guinea Company until it was finally replaced in 1899 by a German colonial administration proper. The new administration recognised all of the sisters’ key holdings, but presented another kind of challenge. As respectable Germans brought wives and families to live in German New Guinea, they established social spaces that competed and contrasted with the Queen’s court. The bungalow at Gunantambu did not remain the unparalleled centre of German New Guinea social life for long. The excesses of Gunantambu deterred the more ascetic of German officials, and they sought company elsewhere, not least at “Raule”, the home of the “Sultan of Matupi”(Max Theil), or “Wahlenburg”, Rudolf Wahlen’s home (Sack and Clark 1980: 47). Many colonials, no doubt, were deterred by the Samoan flavour of the manners and people at Gunantambu.

To local islanders the racial distinctions between the two sisters and other colonisers must have seemed very fine ones. But as colonial domesticity and public life became increasingly German, racial distinctions became more pronounced, and the sisters’ positions as “half-caste Samoan ladies”

more fraught (see as examples, Overell 1923: 51, 55; Pullen-Burry 1909: 109). In the hierarchies of race at the time, the various races of the Pacific were put in particular order: typically with Polynesians assigned a higher place than Melanesians. Race mixing made these hierarchies complex, and Samoan "half-castes", seemingly out of place in New Guinea, complicated things further. Add wealth, gender and respectable marriages, and rigid racial hierarchies appeared more elastic; but, among colonials, race remained potent.

Phebe's son Otto felt the power of race keenly. Chosen by the German governor to organise a celebration of the Kaiser's birthday, German-educated Otto had devotedly gone about his work. But the event did not go as he had planned, and decades later Phebe recalled it clearly. "Many of those present resented it and when [he] offered them drinks [they] insulted him and said 'Who are you to offer us drinks. You are nothing but a half blood, nothing but a kanaka, you are nobody'" (Mead and Parkinson, MS. 4 July 1929: 2). Excluded from a society he felt he belonged to, Otto took drastic steps, leaving his government job and turning to planting. But hierarchies of difference often worked more subtly, more pervasively. Some of Emma's prominence was precisely due to the way that she and her achievements were so unexpected, given racial and gender expectations. One of Emma's visitors could hardly contain their surprise that she was "a half-caste Samoan, and as intelligent and accomplished a woman as any European" (Pitcairn 1891: 164).

As Otto had found, Germans and other colonials were troubled by race mixing, half-castes (*mischlinge*) and other kinds of inter-racial intimacies. In many ways this might have seemed surprising, for in New Guinea, as elsewhere, German colonials were often involved with local island women. Nati Wahlen was the child of one of these relationships, and lived with her "aunt" Phebe after being educated in Germany. She explained:

> My mother was one of [Rudolf Wahlen's] young virgins—all Germans did that, all the colonial white men, and they had to be virgins—it is nothing, why do white men make so much of it? They had to be beautiful as well as virgins. They went to the village chiefs, the *luluai* or *kukurai*, and they would buy them, usually two or three at a time.… Those bloody Germans, they had the time of their lives, five or six women feeding them, waiting on them, and the women liked saying they 'belonged to So-and-So Master', and getting the new things.[9]

Herr Wahlen, Phebe remembered, "kept a regular harem" (Mead and Parkinson, MS. 3 July 1929). In terms of quantity Wahlen might have been an extreme example, but such relationships were commonplace, well known and yet rarely public. This was the cutting edge: the racist proprieties of New Guinea's colonial society at once discouraged legitimate marriages between

Germans and Melanesian women and enabled other—often more exploitative—sexual and domestic relations. These kinds of relations were entwined with the lives of Emma and Phebe, firstly because they shaped understandings of women and race, but also because these were relations—concentrated in and around plantations—that were part of the sisters' ordinary world.

In 1893 Queen Emma married for the last time, to Paul Kolbe. Kolbe was German, a former army officer who had been working in New Guinea as a colonial administrator. He was younger than Emma, and some suggested that the marriage was one of convenience: convenient for him owing to unemployment and supposed debt, and convenient for her as she desired both connections with the German establishment, and the respectability afforded by marriage. The two began travelling together. In 1895 Emma went back to Samoa for a visit for three months, staying with her entourage in a hotel on the Beach at Apia. Later in 1902 she returned to San Francisco. In both places, and on her regular trips to Sydney, she was conspicuous. In 1907, at age 57, Emma took a grand tour of Europe. Phebe on the other hand, stayed at home, overlooking the plantations and increasingly caring for her ailing husband.

German annexation in 1899 had not immediately altered the situation where the sisters lived. The same challenges persisted. There were many more locals than European or Samoan settlers, and understandably the locals were not always welcoming. If the settlers had ever forgotten the dangers of being a trader, which was unlikely, a number of events would have served as tragic reminders. John Coe, the first to join Emma in 1879, had been trading for E.E. Forsayth on the outlying island of Nuguria when he was killed by islanders in 1889. The typical response to such a tragedy was the violence of a punitive expedition, and this particular one was flavoured with vengeance. Bloodshed offered little satisfaction, and worse, it was punctuated by the death of Agostino Stalio, who Emma's main biographer believes had been her domestic partner since about 1884.

Colonialism was undergirded and textured with violence. Certainly there were vigorous local cultures of violence, and attacks by one local group on another were common. But plantations, with their combination of land settlement and waged labour proved to be special concentrations of violence. This was especially clear in the Tolai uprisings of 1890-93, as well as in the attack which killed a German planter (Rudolf Wolff) and endangered one of Emma and Phebe's nieces (Neumann 1992: 10-31). Recruitment often precipitated violence, plantation lands were often acquired forcefully, there were disputes between workers and locals and then, of course, there were the plantations' daily brutalities. After Phebe's husband died the German government would send a "judge" to her plantation monthly, specifically to whip any workers who were troublesome. One labourer had tried to break

into Phebe's room to get to the wives of absent workers. "The Judge had him soundly whipped with leather thongs until he whimpered and said, 'Oh Missus, me like die now'" (Mead and Parkinson, MS. 5 July 1929: 2). Such violence was routine, as routine as Phebe rarely travelling anywhere without "her boys and her Winchester" (Mead and Parkinson, MS. 5 July 1929: 2).

A tragic instance which revealed the depth of their family and business relations, was the suicide of Phebe's son Otto. This was partly over an unpaid debt to his aunt Emma—though it was only a very small one (Overell 1923: 48). It was an extremely painful event (echoed afterward as Phebe's youngest son Franz would also commit suicide). Phebe's daughter Nellie held Emma partly responsible, and "ordered her aunt and her crocodile tears away from the corpse" (Parkinson and Mead, MS. 4 July 1929: 2). The sisters now had much between them, but were bound together still by business and family. But the key anchors in their shared lives, Phebe's work for Emma's company and their aging mother, were coming loose. Their mother Ioana died in 1905, after having long been nursed by Phebe (Mead 1960: 201-2, Parkinson and Mead, MS. 5 July 1929: 3). And Richard and Phebe had begun developing their own plantation, which they moved to about the time that Otto committed suicide—suggesting that the event may have affected relations between the sisters.

Also around this time Emma decided to sell her New Guinea interests and move to Australia. No doubt there were many reasons—her troubled health, the growing German settler presence, her age and changes in the commercial situation, perhaps also the death of Otto. Forsayth & Co was one of the few large plantation interests left in northern New Guinea that was not German. Emma's son was already spending a large part of his time in Sydney as well. Phebe and Richard, with their large family, settled on a new plantation of their own, at Kuradui, not far from Kokopo but still within comfortable range of Ralum. These big changes soon multiplied. In their first few months at Kuradui, Richard Parkinson died, after a long illness and a buggy accident. Phebe was left on a new plantation, with a large collection of children and a wealthy sister who was just about to leave.

'WHAT WILL BECOME OF THEM?'

When Emma sold up in 1909, she was perhaps the largest and wealthiest planter in New Guinea. Heinrich Rudolf Wahlen, a German planter and entrepreneur, managed to find the funds by the end of the year and his Hamburgische Südsee Aktiengesellschaft assumed Forsayth & Co's interests. Emma moved to Mosman in north Sydney, and her health led her again to tour Europe. She was accompanied by her husband, and their European jaunt lasted through most of 1910. By 1911 they were back in Sydney, though

before long Paul Kolbe returned to Europe. Emma was living in Sydney when she received news that her husband was in some distress in Monte Carlo. Emma arrived to find her husband ill in Monte Carlo, where he died on 19 July 1913. Emma died two days later, on the 21st July. She had been unwell for some time, and the papers gave the cause of her death as "heart failure" (*The Argus*, 29 July 1913). The leading Sydney newspaper eulogised Queen Emma as "one of the most notable figures in South Sea circles" (*Sydney Morning Herald* 1913: 16).

Phebe remained in New Guinea. Phebe had refused a generous offer to purchase her plantation along with her sister's. Even after her husband's death she had decided not to join her sister in Sydney. She had been to Australia once and had not liked it (Mead 1960: 203). Phebe was very intimate with the German administration and German officials. She went on walking tours with the governor, and even oversaw the birth of his daughter. Most of her surviving children were still in New Guinea, as were a large number of Phebe's *'āiga* including a full brother, several half-sisters, and a large collection of nieces and nephews. She was a busy woman, a 50 year old in 1913, with labour to recruit, plantations to run. Her husband's death was challenging, but the energy and expertise in running the plantation had long come from Phebe. "Everywhere Miti was recognized and glad cries of Miti, Miti resounded" (Overell 1923: 88). It seemed that Phebe had secured both respectability and financial security, despite the obstacles that she faced as a "half-caste Samoan", a woman, and a widow.

The First World War, however, transformed Phebe's fortunes. The War brought the end of the German empire, and within weeks Australia had invaded and occupied the German colony. Phebe was a German widow, and most of the German men and women were deported, including even some of the Samoans. Of all the troubles caused by the War, Lilian Overell wrote as she watched them unfold, the saddest was "the case of the Samoan women". She opined, "Many of the Germans married half-caste Samoans.... What will become of them?" (Overell 1923: 55). Samoan women of New Guinea were excluded from parties, even prevented from holding their own. Phebe's son, who had declared his intent to serve in the German navy, became a pariah. No longer was the administration filled with old friends who knew and respected them. Phebe's place in society was visibly insecure, as she waited to hear if she would be allowed to remain and whether she would be allowed to keep her properties. It was not until 1922, four years after the end of the war, that it was confirmed Phebe could stay. Business had been poor and prices low, and her Kuradui plantation had large debts. Phebe was forced to sell. She moved in with her children, and turned to her languages and wits, finding a living from a large trunk, recruiting labour with "lap-laps and beads and mirrors

and tomahawks and axes and knives—this was how she bought the boys" (Roberts 1996: 113). Her children were also in danger of losing their own properties, both to the occupying Australians and to creditors. It was tough times for everyone, though Overell thought it "was hardest of all for Miti, a Samoan who knew no other world than the Pacific" (Overell 1923: 150).

The Germans had recognised before the war, as the Australians came to after it, that Phebe—Miti—was someone special, one of the last living pioneers, a kind of living treasure. She reminisced to visitors and held on to papers and photos. Stories gathered about her, and aggregated into images of her as New Guinea pioneer, learning about the natives, but always with an iron fist inside the lace glove. A character in the region's history, Miti was often depicted on a bungalow verandah, with a baby in one hand and a gun in the other (Cayley-Webster 1898: 75-76). In 1921 Phebe entrusted Oliver Bainbridge, who claimed to be a writer, with a large collection of papers and photographs and paid him a substantial amount of money (£100) to write a book about her. He asked for a further £200 (Bainbridge to Parkinson, MS. 11 January 1921). No book came of it. The Australian colonial judge "Monty" (Later Sir Beaumont) Phillips hoped that this could be rectified if Margaret Mead, the American anthropologist then working in the area, took up and completed the task (Mead 1973: 178). Mead's famous work *Coming of Age in Samoa* had been published in 1928 and she was already one of the most celebrated women in America. Mead knew Phebe well and was given some materials and promised to share any profits which the book might make. Mead secured a publisher's interest, but in November 1929 Wall Street crashed and the world soon followed. In distant New Guinea the Depression spread through the devastating collapse of copra and agricultural prices. Before the Depression there was only a small market for Phebe's story; afterwards there was effectively none.

Phebe had fallen on extremely hard times. A proud and dignified, yet grounded and resourceful woman, by the 1930s Phebe had not only lost her plantation and husband, but had seen seven of her twelve children die. Phebe was living, with few means, first with her son-in-law, and then with a grandson. Various promises made to her had not been kept. She turned, reluctantly, to Mead, in the hope that either an English translation of her husband's successful book about New Guinea, or the planned book about her, might provide some funds: "… so you see, my dear friend," she wrote to Mead in 1932, there is "no end [to] my sorrows, I don't think I deserved it" (Parkinson to Mead, MS. 21 July 1932). Mead had heard from publishers that the translation would not be profitable and they were not interested, and while a small publisher was interested in a book about Phebe, it seems largely to have been because of Mead's celebrity, and was very far from concrete.

Mead sent $200 of her own money to Phebe which she phrased as an advance on the book (Morrow to Mead 6 August 1931, Mead 1960: 178-79). As she later explained to Phebe's daughter, "I felt it was a great pity that your mother should not enjoy something of the possible proceeds, should the book ever be written" (Mead to Dolly Messenger, MS. 1 October 1947).

Two years later, having seen Mead when she visited Rabaul, things were even harder. Phebe was stuck in the Solomons, unable to even get back to New Britain where she had a home—"my grandson Rudi & self are stranded living in a little grass house without a penny" (Parkinson to Mead, MS. 8 January 1934). Mead sent another smaller "advance". Phebe let Mead know that this had allowed them to return to Rabaul, where Rudi had gotten a job (Parkinson to Mead, MS. 28 June 1935). Things had improved but the golden days of Gunantambu and Kuradui were well in the past.

Mead finally did write a short biography, a beautiful and poignant essay published 16 years after Miti's death: "Weaver of the Border" (1960). The editor wanted her to write about a different informant, but Mead was only interested in writing about Phebe. She considered the essay would "finally discharge a kind of moral debt" (Mead to Thayer, MS. 10 March 1958). Mead described Miti as, someone who lived in a "world between", tying together two worlds, native and European—a weaver of the border. It was an apt description (though it contained some errors, including about the date and circumstances of Phebe's death), and captured much that was distinctive about Phebe's life, as well as much that was unique about her person. Phebe the collector of culture, recruiter, translator, a woman in a male-dominated world, a Polynesian in colonial society. It was this kind of work that heightened Mead's empathies for Phebe; much of it was work that paralleled what Mead herself was engaged in.

Phebe's death was obscured by the violence and scale of the Second World War. This time world war came directly to Phebe; the Japanese occupied northern New Guinea, turning Rabaul into their major base in the region. Many settlers had left after the Pearl Harbor and Malay Peninsula attacks, and most of those who remained were evacuated moments ahead of the Japanese landing. But not Phebe, Rudi nor his family, who it seemed had been neither invited nor warned—perhaps owing to their German names and connections (Uechtritz 2003). Though the Japanese occupiers continued to let the Parkinsons live on the New Ireland plantation, the nearby crash landing of an American B-17 changed the situation. Rudi, his family and Phebe were placed in an internment camp at Namatanai on New Ireland. In the hardships of the camp Phebe died on 26 May 1944. News of her sister's death had taken a few days to travel from Monte Carlo to Sydney. News of Phebe's death arrived in Sydney over a year after the event (*PIM* 1945: 51).

If Phebe and Emma had then been forgotten, as it often seemed most Polynesian women were, this history might well end with Phebe's death. But the two sisters, especially Emma, had become celebrities in their lives, and their celebrity and significance were enduring. Emma Coe had been noticed before she had become "Queen" Emma, but as the Queen, she was truly famous. "In every corner of the South Seas [Queen Emma's] fame and renown have been the theme of many a captain's gossip, of many a trader's envious encomium" (Pullen-Burry1909: 110). Forty years after Emma's death Australian newspapers were still writing features about her (Blaikie 1954). In 1965, the journalist Robert Robson published his biography *Queen Emma*, a self-described "colourful romance" (*PIM* 1953: 16). Robson worked hard to unearth Emma's life, but he often exaggerated, even "reconstructed" dialogue. For these and other reasons the book is unreliable. It was also written through a colonial prism: fascinated with cannibalism, and framed through patronising and offensive depictions of "natives" (Robson 1965: 92, 96-97, 99, 127-29, 148). Robson built his portrayal of Emma on earlier writers who had defined her, and indeed Polynesian cultures more generally, through a saturating and exotic sexuality. Robson used this sexuality to explain much about Emma's person, her achievements as well as her mother-culture.[10]

Most of the accounts of Emma have likewise been preoccupied with her gender and sexuality, run through with visions of the Polynesian exotic. Robson's book, typifying most posthumous accounts of Emma, is devotedly prurient. For those familiar with the deep genealogies of the European sexualisation of Polynesia, the rendering of it as exotic and erotic, this is hardly surprising. Nor is it surprising that such imagery might be retransmitted in representation after representation, heavily guided and sourced from a few earlier and flawed versions of her story. A. Grove-Day's biographical essay on Queen Emma, for instance, was largely a condensate of Robson (Grove-Day 1969: 82-122). The numerous newspaper stories about Emma, or more recently a proliferation of short online biographies, are likewise related to this genealogy. Geoffrey Dutton's novel, *Queen Emma of the South Seas*, though much less indebted to Robson and based on his own research, remains largely in tune with these earlier depictions of Emma. Dutton's Queen Emma comes to success less through acumen and strategy, but because she knows that "a woman has power through her womanliness and her body" (Dutton 1976: 38). Dutton's novel was later produced as the television mini-series *Emma: Queen of the South Seas* (1988). The Australian-made film starred Barbara Carrera, a Latina soap star, as Emma, and duly emphasised her beauty and sexuality.

Phebe has received less attention from writers, yet her treatment has been in many ways more full and textured than that given to her sister. This is perhaps due not only to differences between their lives, but also because

those who wrote most about Phebe—Lilian Overell and Margaret Mead—were women, and women who knew Phebe personally. These women still observed Phebe through prisms of difference—particularly shaped by class and race—but they had sensibilities that comprehended some of the peculiar challenges Phebe faced in entering public, commercial and colonial domains. No doubt it also helped that they were uninterested in either Phebe or Emma's sexual lives, while fully understanding that intimate lives—in Phebe's case, with local peoples as well as her family—were critically important in their lives and fortunes.

With such remarkable lives, there is no simple message to be drawn out of Phebe and Emma's stories. The accounts that best capture them entertain their complexity and capture their contradictions, and there have been too few of these stories told. Phebe and Emma had worked to be respectable, and to claim positions in a colonial society ready to refuse or question them. Often the reason was not more than that they were Samoan, or that they were women. Yet despite the disparagement and discrimination their gender and Samoan ancestry made them vulnerable to, both Phebe and Emma lived easily with being "half-castes", with being Samoan, with being women. They embraced their *'āiga* and brought them to their new land and lives, when they might easily have left or hidden them. The sisters sang, ate, spoke and lived in Samoan ways, even when it invited the kind of colonial prejudices they were well aware of. They produced and lived with their own understandings of femininity and gender, some of which challenged those that prevailed around them. If so much of what was said and written about the sisters has emphasised their adoption of powerful European ways and culture, which they did fully and convincingly, the sisters were well aware that this was more than balanced, because those who saw them as different would always see them only as Samoan. But the sisters are not so easily described. They were women remarkable for negotiating and crossing between different realms, whether those of Europe, Melanesia and Polynesia, private and public, men and women. Phebe and Emma, weavers of the border.

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NOTES

1. According to Robson (1965), Jonas washed up on the Samoan shore in 1838 as a mere teenager, and returned to Samoa in about 1845. Jonas himself makes no mention of an earlier visit, and counts 18 years in late 1864 (Coe to Secretary of State, MS. 15 September 1864, District of the United States Consul-Apia, II).
2. The details, taken from the Coe family Bible, can be found in Robson (1965: 32-33).
3. Emma's Jonas later married in Samoa, to Ida Smitz, in a wedding that brought together Apia's white and half-caste society. There was a "Great procession of decorated buggies. Dr & Mrs Funk, bridesmaids, Therese Schmitz, Miss Ide, Lottie Volkman, Maggie Betham, Thomas & Sam Meredith, E.F. Allen, a German Clerk, Moli the King's brother." It was followed by a wedding dance in the Apia public hall (Cusack-Smith, MS. 1895)
4. See, particularly, Barry Rigby (1973), and various materials during March 1876, DUSCA, IV.
5. A shorter but more reliable account can be found in Biskup (1974: 6-20).
6. Festetics de Tolna (1904: 72-79) seems to be the source for this rumour, which is endorsed by Niau (1936: 159-60) and Dutton (1976: 160-61).
7. See Hahl 1938: 87; Parkinson 1907: 28-29, 852. Emma is said to have brought coconuts from Samoa (Dwyer 1938: 24-102).
8. Festetics de Tolna (1904: 71-72) tells some particularly harsh tales of the Queen, unconfirmed by any other sources.
9. See Roberts 1996: 109. The life story of Natalie Ingram (Nati Wahlen) is instructive in the texture of these complicated relations, and offers a unique insight.
10. See, Anon. [George Henry Kingsley and George Robert Charles Herbert, Thirteenth Earl of Pembroke], 1895: 209. The section about a Samoan princess (pp. 226-31) is interpreted by Robson (and following him by Grove-Day and Dutton) as referring to Emma Coe, but there is no clear evidence to back this interpretation.

ABSTRACT

Emma Coe (1850-1913) and Phebe Coe (1863-1944) were sisters born in Samoa to an American father and a Samoan mother. Raised in Samoa, the sisters went on to live much of their lives in Melanesia, mostly in northern New Guinea. The sisters became prominent in business, planting, colonial society, ethnographic work and public culture. This essay is a biography of the sisters, whose histories were extraordinary, as they made public and commercial lives at a time when few women did or indeed could, and where a mixed-race identity was often made into a burden.

Keywords: Biography, Samoa, women, "mixed-race", New Guinea

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

ADRIENNE L. KAEPPLER
Smithsonian Institution

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 Kaeppler, 1975

At Matamoana in Lapaha, Tongatapu, on 10 September 1924, a baby girl was born to Peata Takavahalelemoelangi 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).

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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 ‘Unalotokifangatapu[7] 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 choose 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 Tuʻifua.

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

During her work with women, Sister Tuʻifua learned from them about traditional medicine. When she visited the villages, she learned that certain women were known for certain medicines (*faitoʻo*). Ordinarily, when one wanted to learn medicinal secrets, one had to take gifts of kava, mats and barkcloth to the *faitoʻo* (meaning here 'the person who knows the medicine'). Some *faitoʻo* shared their knowledge with Sister Tuʻifua 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 Tuʻifua 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 Tuʻifua at an international conference in New Delhi, India. Photo courtesy of Sister Malia Tuʻifua.

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 (Kaeppler 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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KULA THE NURSE AND NUA THE TEACHER: TOKELAU'S PROFESSIONAL PIONEERS

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Kula Fiaola 1924–2003

Nua Mamoe 1924–2007

The atolls of Tokelau, named Atafu, Fakaofo and Nukunonu, are located north of Samoa, east of Tuvalu, west of the northern Cooks and south of the Phoenix Islands (now part of Kiribati). They were never considered worthy of much attention by metropolitan powers, and were remote and difficult to get to. Being atolls they are tiny and resource poor. Being "true" atolls they have neither passes nor secure off-shore anchorages. In the mid-1800s the atolls were severely depopulated in the interests of conversion: 500 were removed to Uvea by the Marist mission in 1852 (Huntsman 2004) and the London Missionary Society knowingly allowed virulent dysentery to enter Fakaofo in their eagerness to install a Samoan teacher there. On top of these depredations, over 250 were carried off to Peru in 1863 (Maude 1981, Huntsman and Hooper 1996: 204-10). Those that remained in Nukunonu were Marist Catholic, those in Atafu LMS Protestant, and those in Fakaofo

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of both these Christian persuasions. By the turn of the century, the Tokelau population had grown from 200-300 in 1863 to nearly 1000, the Union Jack had been raised on each atoll and each had thereby been brought under British protection, and the three atoll villages had adapted their pre-contact institutions to their new circumstances. Tokelau was, and would continue to be, three virtually autonomous, staunchly egalitarian polities.

For 36 years Great Britain tried to oversee these most remote places through the Western Pacific High Commission via its deputies in Samoa and Tonga (1889-1909), and then as appendages of the Gilbert and Ellice Island Protectorate (1910-1915), and finally as part of the Gilbert and Ellice Island Colony (from 1916). Oversight was tenuous and administratively unworkable because of the absence or uncertainty of transport. So it was that in the early 1920s the Colonial Office in London decided to persuade the New Zealand Government through the office of New Zealand's Governor General to assume administrative responsibility on Great Britain's behalf for these central Pacific atolls they called the Union Islands. From London this appeared a simple, straightforward solution to a long-standing problem since New Zealand already administered nearby Western Samoa under a League of Nations Mandate. Nonetheless, the negotiations were protracted and involved other parties and interests. Nothing of these negotiations were made known to the inhabitants of the Tokelau atolls, yet when they were finally appraised of the new arrangements in 1925, the Tokelau people pronounced themselves satisfied because they would allow them easy access to Western Samoa. From the Tokelau point of view, their colonial linkage with the Gilbert and Ellice Islands had compromised their access to their Samoa-based missions and the educational opportunities they provided, and to colonial port town employment. The New Zealand attachment did not solve administrative problems, which were exacerbated by the Depression and the Second World War, and not until after the War, in a very changed colonial climate, did the New Zealand Administration give any thought to establishing schools in Tokelau or to improving the very elementary health services.[1] When these thoughts were implemented and plans were afoot the New Zealand officials discovered that there were educated and professionally-trained Tokelau people in Samoa who could set up and serve these new institutions. They were people who had taken advantage of the access to schooling that Tokelau's administrative linkage to Samoa had given them.[2]

Prominent among them were two women, both born in Tokelau in 1924, whose families, and particularly their fathers, had enabled and encouraged them to take advantage of opportunities for education. These women had excelled at Samoan schools and had been urged by their parents and other Tokelau people to pursue professional training. Both returned to their

homeland to initiate changes, to give decades of dedicated service and to be exemplary role models for others. In Tokelau they have long been celebrated for their devotion to the welfare of their compatriots, but neither was adequately rewarded for her professional achievements, for those who made such decisions were not Tokelau people but New Zealand officials who had peculiar ideas about the intrinsic abilities and merits of women.

In Tokelau culture women are valued not only as mothers and nurturers of the next generation but also as *fatupaepae,* literally 'foundation stones', of the many extended family corporations (*kāiga*) that comprise the villages. Women's roles in their families as sisters are complementary to those of men as brothers. They customarily remain in their natal homes after marriage to manage internal family matters, including the equitable allocation of family resources within the family, especially to their brothers, who reside in their wive's family homes but continue to provide fish and produce for their natal family and as elders to represent that family's interests in the village council. In a succinct characterisation: women reside and divide; men provide and decide.[3] While it is the duty of brothers (and men in general) to protect their sisters (and women in general) from danger, it is the responsibility of sisters (and women in general) to give refuge to their brothers (and men in general) in distress. Women are not considered of intrinsic less worth or to have less ability than men.

The two women, whom I portray here, were considered as worthy and able as their brothers by their parents and as their male colleagues by their Tokelau compatriots. They are no longer serving Tokelau as nurse and teacher, and those they inspired and mentored have taken their places, yet they are still celebrated as Kula the nurse (died 2003) and Nua the teacher (died 2007). Their stories are similar in some ways and complementary in others, and I record them here, though not exactly as they told them to me.[4]

KULA THE NURSE

On the 30th of April 1924, a baby girl was born to Kula and Fiaola in Fakaofo, and she was named Kalapu. Fifteen years later, her name was changed to that of her mother by the decree of a teacher at the mission school in Samoa because there was another girl named Kalapu at the school. Though thereafter she was Kula to everyone, she signed her name K. Kula Fiaola s.n.—the K. for her original name and the s.n. for staff nurse.

Kula was brought up in the family homestead of her mother's extended family, her father having moved there at marriage following usual Tokelau practice. Her mother had replaced her own mother as the *fatupaepae* 'foundation stone' of that family. She had "remained inside the family" while her brothers had "gone outside" to their wives' homes at marriage. Yet, her brothers, and

her own mother's brothers, brought fish from the sea and produce from the plantations for her to keep and allocate, and she looked after her elderly mother and her brothers' children. The family were devoted Christians and staunch members of the LMS Church. Three of her mother's brothers were missionary pastors and the other two were local deacons; one sister was a pastor's wife while the other two were wives of deacons. That Kula became a devoted Christian too is not at all surprising. However, her mother had a more marked influence on her later life in another respect. She was extremely meticulous in everything she did: in plaiting mats, in cooking, in maintaining the family homestead; and she provided generously for visitors to or guests of the village. Kula's skills and behaviour as a nurse conformed to her mother's practice. Indeed, Kula recalled that in the days of her childhood, well before there were any trained nurses in Tokelau, when locally recognised midwives assisted women in childbirth, her mother's specific role was to clean and bandage the umbilical cord of the newborn. Given that septicaemia of the umbilicus was the most prevalent cause of infant deaths, her mother's role was crucial—and in later years Kula would perform the same role as part of her nursing duties.

The family of her father, Fiaola, while equally firm in their Christian belief, did not have the staunch devotion to the LMS church that her mother's family did. Kula was not as close to her father's family as to her mother's, yet her father was perhaps a more significant figure in her life. He was a very wise and thoughtful man, though, like most of his generation, he had no "proper" schooling. He was an extremely skilled fisherman and a close friend of the Tokelau doctor, Logologo.[5] Fiaola continually gave encouragement and support to Kula, at the same time allowing her to make her own decisions.

Her father's and her mother's widely extended families gave Kula an extensive network of kin in Fakaofo and beyond. Her father's family was truly pan-Tokelau because his grandparents had land rights in all three atolls, and established estates for their children in each. Though these lands were held and harvested by fourth and fifth generation descendants of the original couple, the three local branches retained a strong sense of kinship and the obligations that constitute it. Kula's acknowledged rights and the obligations that her kin on her father's side fulfilled meant that, though she was born and raised in Fakaofo, she was a pan-Tokelau person.

In Kula's childhood years schooling in Tokelau was left to the missions and Protestant children attended the pastor's school where they studied the Bible and learned to read and write Samoan. What else they were taught depended how the pastor and his wife had been schooled, and in the later 1930s Fakaofo's pastor was quite well schooled and valued education. When he and his wife proposed to take some boys and girls from Fakaofo for further education at the LMS mission schools in Samoa (Papauta for girls

and Maluafou for boys), Kula's parents decided that she must go. So Kula entered Papauta, together with a cousin, in March 1939 and five years later, in November 1943, having proved to be an excellent student, she was urged to take an entrance examination for a profession.

What might her profession be? On the one hand, her parents had not intended that she be schooled to become a pastor's wife, which was the aim of many parents who sent their girls to Papauta. On the other hand, they left the decision to her. For young women there were really only two choices: nursing and teaching. Kula had wanted to be a teacher, but her missionary teachers urged her to train as a nurse, and so did a prominent Tokelau man working at the LMS Printing Works. So, at their urging, she took the examination for entry to nursing training and to her own surprise passed it. She had doubted that her English was good enough.

In early 1944 she left the Tokelau household where she had been living and went to stay at the Central Hospital in Apia. All of the staff involved in nursing training were *papālagi* (from overseas), as were all those who held senior positions at the Hospital. Samoan doctors and nurses were usually assigned to district hospitals. Kula vividly recalled one of her teachers, a midwife named Sister Duggan. She was a very skilled nurse, and also very strict, often almost terrifyingly. In some respects she was a model for Kula. For example, Sister Duggan would gently, but sharply, slap the buttocks of women in labour, this tactic was to make them concentrate on what they should be doing and not dwell on the pain that they were feeling. Kula regularly used this tactic in many of the hundreds of deliveries she supervised. In later years, younger Tokelau nurses who just completed their training and were under Kula's supervision recalled how shocked they were at her practice. Kula would explain that this was an effective and proper tactic with women who knew you well, and trusted you, but it was not something you did to strangers. Certainly, Tokelau women trusted Kula, felt safe in her hands, and apparently never felt abused or ill done by. Other nurses were, nonetheless, reluctant to so belabour women in labour.

Nursing training, while including lectures and textbook reading about signs and symptoms of particular illnesses, consisted primarily of practical, hands-on experience in the Hospital. Kula was to have more direct experience than most. In 1946 there was a serious flu epidemic throughout Tokelau and Kula was sent with a Samoan doctor to Tokelau, where she remained for three months until the epidemic was over.

After three and half years training and passing her last examination in mid-1947, Kula became a certified nurse, but she did not immediately return to Tokelau. She was assigned to nurse at two district hospitals in 'Upolu, and later at the Central Hospital.

During her last year nursing in Samoa, Kula married a Samoan doctor and the following year (1951) her son, Logotasi, was born. Kula had regularly stayed with Samuelu and Naomi, a Fakaofo couple who had established a home in Samoa and were surrogate parents for many Tokelau young people schooling or training in Apia. Kula continued to live with Samuelu and Naomi after she was married, her husband joining the household when he was off-duty, and Naomi took care of Logotasi when Kula returned to work.

This arrangement did not last long, however; in 1951 Kula and her husband were sent to Fakaofo, her husband to be the doctor and she the nurse. It seemed a perfect arrangement, but it was not successful. Her husband found it difficult to conform to Tokelau expectations and, after serving briefly in Atafu and Nukunonu (while Kula remained in sole charge at Fakaofo), he left Tokelau. His departure in effect ended their marriage. Thereafter, Kula's three commitments were her nursing, her son and her wide family, all of them bound up in her devotion to Tokelau.

Kula was the first qualified Tokelau nurse and the third qualified health professional in Tokelau history. The other two were known officially as "native medical practitioners" and had trained in Fiji in the 1910s. One of them served only briefly in Tokelau, but the other, the aforementioned Logologo, known in Tokelau as "the Doctor" began tending to Tokelau ills in 1917. Otherwise medical services were provided by "dressers" who, befitting this *papālagi* designation, dressed sores and wounds, but also dispensed patent medicines, e.g., Epsom salts, castor oil or aspirin, in keeping with their Tokelau designation as *tala vai* 'dispensers of medicine'. All of them were men, who had been trained in Funafuti (Tuvalu) and were counselled from time to time by the itinerate Dr Logologo. In each atoll, certain mature women were renowned locally as midwives and Dr Logologo counselled them too, but they received no pay and had no official position. At least in Fakaofo there were nurse aides, again unofficial and unremunerated, who bathed and tended the sick. Logologo had retired before Kula returned to Tokelau. Right through the 1950s the presence of doctors in the atolls was erratic. The *Annual Reports* of the era present the health services as follows (this 1956 report was repeated almost verbatim annually):

> The medical services of the Group are administered from Western Samoa, and regular visits to each atoll are made by European medical officers. A Samoan medical practitioner is now stationed at each island.... Other medical staff, consisting of nurses and dressers, are distributed throughout the Group. All these personnel obtain their training at Apia Hospital in Western Samoa. The standard of training of the medical staff is sufficiently high to cope with the great majority of cases, but if additional advice or instructions are needed these are quickly and efficiently provided by means of the radio service. (*Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives* 1957, A.3: 115)

The actual situation was rather different from that reported. The visits by European medical officers were hardly regular, Samoan medical practitioners may have been stationed but they were not present, only one nurse was "distributed" to the Group—Kula in Fakaofo. On one score it is accurate: her training was high and she did cope with many cases. Her own dramatic account of one of these cases (my translation) highlights the misrepresentations above.[6]

> A man in a temper—piqued because he felt he was not receiving his fair share of food—seriously cut his own arm an inch or so below the elbow with a bush knife. He had cut himself very deeply—severing an artery so that the blood gushed out and even cutting into the bone. I tried to stitch it up, but it was too late to close the wound. In the event it became septic and I wired Samoa for help. It was arranged that a doctor would come up from Samoa to deal with it—on the *Joyita*. But the *Joyita* never arrived.[7] As the days and weeks passed the infection became worse and worse. The smell of putrid flesh was overpowering and put the poor man completely off his food. Something had to be done soon, so I again called the doctor in Samoa for advice, and he said that I would simply have to do what I could. I knew that only surgery would save the man from dying of gangrene poisoning.
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> I went to the Pastor for counsel and he advised me to leave it be (*tuku vē*)—after all it was the man's own foolishness that had brought this upon him, and further he was concerned that if I did anything and something went wrong I would be blamed for whatever happened—blamed because I had assumed to be skilled like a doctor. Truly he was very concerned for me, lest something untoward occur.
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> Then I spoke to my father and he said that he would pray. If it was the will of God that the man could only survive because of my intervention, then I had to intervene. 'What you need to do, you do,' he said. I agreed with my father.
>
> I thought about what I would do. I humbled myself before God. I would not take the patient to the room where operations were usually done by doctors, but to the thatched ward where nurses look after patients. My father remained outside praying, and told me to go ahead. I knew I was not a doctor but I knew that God would guide me. I said to the man's mother: "Are you confident?" She replied: "Kula, I believe that the Lord will assist you." My father said: "Go ahead."
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> We prepared everything and I believed that he would survive. With two dressers in attendance, I gave a local anaesthetic. I went ahead, I was not anxious. I had been anxious but God reassured me. He led me. It was really not difficult at all—just as if I were a real doctor. No one told me how to do it, I just did it.
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> The cut was on the inside of the arm and here the infection had begun and spread quickly. On the outer side it had not spread as rapidly, and fortunately the infection had not spread as quickly up the arm as down. I cut through the bone at the elbow joint, scraped away the rotten flesh and carefully cleaned the

> remaining flesh and skin with antiseptic. Then I flipped the cleaned, healthy flesh and skin over the elbow stump and sewed it in place. After it was done I wired Samoa to inform the doctor that it had been successful.
>
> There was no difficulty, it was easy. Really my father, and also the pastor, helped. The pastor was genuinely concerned that I would be blamed if something went wrong. But more important was the faith and support of my father.

The Nurses Association in Western Samoa acknowledged her outstanding nursing by giving her their Awards Cup the same year. Kula's surgery patient in time became a Fakaofo elder and a member of the village elders' council.

This story was not just Kula's story; many others told it. It was a testimony of their trust in and admiration for her. They recognised her devotion to their well-being, her dedication to her profession and to Tokelau. There is no account of the event in official reports. There are other stories to be told in Kula's nursing career, but none nearly as dramatic as this. More important, however, was Kula's constancy, her enduring concern for people's well-being manifest in her regular nursing practice. Hundreds of Tokelau babies were delivered into her hands, and some of these babies became mothers themselves under Kula's guidance. She dealt repeatedly with flu outbreaks when just about every villager was ill and more often than not the promised medicine to alleviate their symptoms did not arrive until they had all recovered. She managed hospital wards packed to overflowing with children and adults suffering from highly infectious diseases like hepatitis, measles and chicken pox.[8] She bandaged and dispensed medication in clinics day after day. And she rigorously trained numerous young women who were inspired to become nurses by Kula's example. Before they went to Apia for formal training she instructed them as nurse aides and upon their return to Tokelau she mentored them as staff nurses. The training regime for nurse aides was strict, and was transmitted in sharp precise instructions at some distance. I recall Kula reposing in the Fakaofo nurses' house, apparently engrossed in a game of patience or in the fierce competition of a game of cards or dominos (she was an avid card player and had a set of dominos that went to double-twelve) yet alert to everything that was going on around her. A loud chirp to a nurse aide at a considerable distance would be followed by a command to attend to something, or bring something, or do otherwise than she had been doing. Those that passed Kula's training regime, and became nurses like her, share her pride in doing things properly. As of the late 1990s, eight of her Fakaofo nurse aides became qualified nurses and five of them were still serving. She instilled in them a strong tradition of pride in their work and in their hospital.

Although Kula nursed throughout Tokelau, Fakaofo was her home. There she reigned over the Papa, a reclamation on the reef flat some metres

northwards of the village proper where Fakaofo's hospital—a dispensary, doctor's office, wards and nurses quarters—was located. Built in the 1930s, it was a place of great local pride, and literally a Fakaofo creation. It was a place separate from the village, clean and private, where no children were allowed unless they were patients (because, said Kula, kids can be naughty and cause accidents), where the breezes revived the ailing and infections were isolated from the village. Kula provided succour to the concerned and ill, but took no nonsense from anyone. The hospital rules were strict and charge nurse Kula a stern disciplinarian. A younger nurse recalled Kula sending people away from the Papa because they had come to the Hospital not bathed and cleanly dressed. If one came for treatment, one should have bathed and attired oneself in clean clothes, unless of course it was an emergency.

After six or so years in Fakaofo, Kula was transferred to Nukunonu, probably because there was no doctor there and a Tokelau doctor had been placed in Fakaofo. For over a decade she was shifted repeatedly between Nukunonu and Fakaofo (with one brief stay at Atafu) as her services were needed—again often because there was no doctor and her firm and experienced hand was needed to take charge of the local health service.[9]

Wherever Kula was in charge, the Women's Committee became active, keeping the village swept and clean of rubbish, keeping an eye on the welfare of children, and conducting *ahiahi* 'visitations' to see that all homes were in order. Though officially under the auspices of the doctor and the leadership of the wives of the two elected village officers, in Nukunonu and Fakaofo it was more often Kula's presence that activated the Committee.[10]

When she was first in Nukunonu, in the late 1950s, Father Alex McDonald was the priest there. He was a teacher himself and advised her and made arrangements on her behalf for Logotasi to attend the Marist Brothers' School (A'oga Felela) in Apia. So in 1960, when Kula went for a refresher course in Apia, she enrolled Logo at the school, where he continued right through his secondary school years, staying as he had as a baby with Samuelu and Naomi. Samuelu was not happy about Logotasi receiving a Catholic education, but Kula insisted on him attending the Catholic school, trusting the advice of the priest.[11] Her faith in the priest's advice turned out to be well founded. Logotasi did very well and was awarded a Tokelau scholarship for further education in New Zealand. Kula requested a period of leave to spend time with him in Samoa before he left and to witness his departure. In time he fulfilled his mother's highest hopes: graduating with a Master's degree from university, gaining a senior position in the New Zealand public service, and later putting his experience and expertise in the service of Tokelau, supporting his mother's extended family and establishing his own family—including, of course, a daughter named Kula.

As well as her son, there were many children who came to call Kula mother. The older children of her mother's brother's daughter, who was raised as Kula's sister, called her *mātua* 'mother', as children normally call their mother's sisters. She told of how one of her *tama* 'sons', upon completing his dentistry training in Fiji, returned to Fakaofo, and, in keeping with what he had learned abroad, repeatedly urged the women who smoked to quit—Kula among them. The women resented the persistence and insistence of this young man telling them what to do, but Kula, to set an example, stopped smoking.

Kula's compassion for the unfortunate was fully expressed by how she came to care for her "other children". First, there was the infant conceived under unfortunate circumstances that no one really wanted. Kula delivered the baby and took her as her own—arranging for new mothers to be wet-nurses and herself feeding the child powdered-milk substitute and the jelly-like meat of the young coconut. Then for years she succoured and tended a severely disabled boy, making sure that he had whatever opportunity could possibly benefit him.

Many people, speaking about Kula, recalled her deep compassion. She frequently passed nights wide-awake, alert to the needs of a person who was ill. One man remembered her sympathy for his severely disabled child, and how she would stay up nights caring for the child when she was very ill so that his wife could get some rest.

Although Kula officially retired in 1984 or 1985, she continued working. Her actual retirement was delayed for two related reasons. A new hospital had been built on an islet some distance from the main village of Fakaofo. There were not sufficient staff nurses to tend a dispensary at the Papa and run the new hospital, but it was absurd that people picking up daily medication or in immediate need of minor medical attention should have to travel by motored runabout 15 minutes or so (depending on the sea) to THE hospital. So Kula again took charge of the Papa—or more precisely half of it because the new local administration and wireless offices occupied the other half—and from there dispensed drugs and dealt with minor complaints. This was until 1987, when a cyclone demolished the reclamation that had stood for 50 years, and the dispensary was shifted to a substantial structure right in the village on a reclaimed section at lagoon shore. Then in 1990 yet another cyclone with very severe storm surges demolished that reclamation and the structure upon it, and the dispensary moved yet again to the upper level of a village house (the administration office had been shifted to the lower level after the earlier cyclone).

Kula wrote in her own brief account of her life (in the Fakaofo local newspaper) noting that as of "24/4/90 I rested for the first time from the work of being a nurse and am in the family", but this is not exactly true. She

did indeed reside in the family homestead, yet she still went to the upstairs dispensary to tend to the residents of Fakaofo. Only in 1992 did she finally retire when she went to New Zealand to join Logotasi and his family. Counting from Kula's earliest, though brief, service in Tokelau in 1946, when a flu epidemic raged, to 1992, when she left Fakaofo to really retire, her nursing career spanned 46 years. Kula, reflecting on her years of nursing, remarked:

> People must trust nurses and doctors at the hospital, and they obey their instructions because of that trust. In the old days, perhaps we did not think very fast, but we did things properly and carefully. Things have changed. Now people think fast, have a lot more knowledge, but they do not do things properly.

I rather suspect that the new hospital—modern as it may be—sums up Kula's disquiet. The hospital on the Papa was a refuge, a place of order and control, where things were done properly.

Repeatedly it has been asserted: "The staff nurses... are really capable of doing their duties in the absence of a doctor" (*Matagi Tokelau* 1991: 172). In Kula's case, she showed herself capable of fulfilling many duties of a doctor, but for this she was never officially recognised in status or pay. In 1975, her annual salary after 24 years of service was less than half that of a Fiji-trained doctor who had recently qualified and had less than three-year's service.

In 1982 Kula was awarded a New Zealand Queen's Service Medal for Public Service for which she was grateful without pride. Her pride was in having had the opportunity to serve her people as a nurse and in having inspired others to do likewise.

NUA, THE TEACHER

Nua was also born in 1924 on the 3rd of November in Atafu, the fourth child of Lepaio and Aga. Lepaio, as a bright young man, was selected for training as a medical "dresser" and spent some time in Funafuti, but his marriage put an end to his training and this career. Four years after Nua was born he decided to see if he could find a job in Samoa and Aga went with him, leaving Nua in Atafu with Veronika and Nikotemo. Lepaio came to be employed by the New Zealand Administration as a warden at the Tafaigata prison. With this job went a house near the prison and this house became the home away from home for numerous Atafu young people at school or working in Samoa.

In Atafu Veronika and Nikotemo were quite simply Nua's "parents". They looked after her even before her birth parents went to Samoa, just as they had looked after her mother, Aga. The explanation is a bit complicated. Veronika was the child of a Samoan chiefly family from Vaimoso, a village on the outskirts of Apia. She had come to Atafu in the 1890s as the wife of

Daniel Jennings,[12] who was a trader. After Daniel's death, Veronika married Nikotemo, and continued to run her former husband's business that was licensed in her new husband's name. Her enduring reputation is summed up in the name Atafu bestowed upon her, Talitigā 'Comforter of the Distressed'. Veronika had no children of her own, but raised and mothered many. Aga was probably the first, since she was related to Daniel.[13] With her marriage to Nikotemo, Veronika gained two more children: his youngest son by his former wife and his sister's youngest son. In later years, together they cared for several children of these earlier children, including Nua.

Nikotemo was appointed Atafu's Faipule (official responsible for local administration and law enforcement) when New Zealand officially took over Tokelau's administration in 1926 and remained Atafu's Faipule until his death in 1949. He was an intelligent and able man, and had some fluency in English. He and Dr Logologo were fast friends. Logologo usually brought along his eldest son when he visited Nikotemo. Nua told this story of one of these visits.

> Nikotemo and Logologo were inside talking, not wanting to be disturbed, so the doctor's son and I were outside with my mother's two 'brothers'. They goaded me to wrestle with the doctor's son because he was strutting around and acting pretty tough. They worked me up to challenge him and he responded, slapping his upper arms in the customary challenge. My 'mother's brothers' then directed my movements, shouting out for me grab his neck and choke him, to throw him to the ground, and finally to throw him into the pile of ash and cinder from the earth oven. I did throw the poor boy into the ashes to the great delight of those two.

Nua found this incident of her childhood particularly memorable because of her later collegial relations with the same doctor's son during the many years that they were both teachers at the Atafu school.

Nua attended the Atafu pastor's school, where she reached the second level. She was rather sickly as a child, suffering from a mysterious 'recurring ailment' (*tauale oho*) in her stomach. During her 12th year, her illness became more severe and once she was so seriously ill that her family called for the pastor, fearing that she was dying. All her parents—those in Atafu and those in Apia—agreed that she must go to Samoa 'to seek a remedy' (*hakili he togafiti*) either *papālagi* or Samoan. This was 1936 and a major change in her life course.

Enroute to Samoa the ship stopped in Fakaofo, and there she encountered relatives on her mother's side. They were rather taken aback because she did not regard them as kin. She thought that her family were only Nikotemo and Veronika, and her two 'brothers'. Then again in Samoa she was miserable, crying night and day for her "parents" in Atafu, even though she had come to stay with her birth parents. Her homesickness only abated when some

Atafu young people, attending school in Apia, came to stay at the house near the prison. Her parents sought explanations and remedies for her illness everywhere. They went to doctors at the hospital, but they could find nothing wrong with her. They went to traditional Samoan healers, but they too were of no use. Yet they persisted and their persistence was finally rewarded. A Samoan doctor stationed at the district hospital outside Apia diagnosed what it was and prescribed some pills and after four months her ailment disappeared, never to recur.

Her father Lepaio was well regarded by Samoans and New Zealand officials alike. At the time of the Mau uprising this Tokelau prison warden had given sympathetic consideration to the imprisoned Samoan activists—many of them *matai* of considerable eminence. The Samoans in appreciation bestowed a title upon him, and Nua recalled that their household was always well provided for by Samoans who were grateful to him. The New Zealand officials found him to be a conscientious and reliable employee and granted him the same privileges as their Samoan employees, which meant that his children were eligible for government schools and scholarships.

Consequently, when Nua had regained her health, Lepaio enrolled her in the government school at Malifa, even though she was already about 18 years old and had only had mission schooling. She had to start at a lower primary grade, but she was quickly promoted and soon completed her primary education at Standard 2. Then she took the government examinations for admission to secondary school. These were crucial examinations that determined whether a child would be eligible for any post-primary schooling. Shortly after she took the examinations, Lepaio became ill and she stayed at home to care for him. By the time he had recovered the school year had begun, and, when she tardily appeared at the Malifa Girl's College, she was told that there was no place available for her. Actually, another had been put in her place; the opportunity had been taken to deny a place to a Tokelau girl in favour of a Samoan (*lotoleaga auā hē he Samoa* 'out of spite because not a Samoan'). When she told her father, he would not accept the situation and went straight to the *papālagi* missionary in charge, who called for Nua's files only to discover that her grades on the examinations were right at the top. She went to Malifa College for Girls for three years—again advancing rapidly through the classes, and ended her secondary schooling at Form 4.

The time had come for her to select professional training and to take the appropriate examination. She wanted to train at the Hospital, and Kula, who was already in training, encouraged her. Though she passed the qualifying examination, she was rejected for nurses' training because of a minor disability, the consequence of an injury she suffered some years before, giving her limited vision in her left eye.[14] When she was not accepted on medical

grounds for nursing, she took the examination for teacher training—her other option—and began training as a teacher the following year. This twist of fate was to be of vast benefit to her homeland.

An officer of the New Zealand Department of Education had gone to Tokelau to review the education situation a year or two before, and had spoken with Nikotemo and Veronika. They told him about their "daughter" who was training as a teacher in Samoa. Then Nikotemo, while visiting Samoa on the invitation of the Samoan Fono Faipule in 1948, had signed a bond committing Nua to serve as a teacher when she completed training.

After the aforementioned review the New Zealand Administration undertook to establish *tulagalua* or government schools at Fakaofo and Atafu,[15] and they went in search of teachers to go to Tokelau and set up the schools. In late 1950, when Nua had completed only two years of teacher training, she was assigned to go to Atafu along with Sofi Pua, an experienced Samoan teacher. Ropati Simona, a Tokelau man born of missionary parents in Papua, who had been head teacher at the Samoan model school, was assigned to Fakaofo, along with Ioata Tanielu, whose mother had been born in Atafu and who was a teacher trainee in the same class as Nua. Sofi and Nua in Atafu, and Ropati and Ioata in Fakaofo, were to establish government schools and teach all the pupils. Ropati, the most senior and experienced, was the head teacher overall.

Although Nua may have had some reservations about taking up this difficult job with only two years training, she felt a strong obligation to return to Atafu not just because she was bonded to teach, but to satisfy all her parents who had such confidence in her ability. Furthermore, Nikotemo had died the year before and Veronika was still in Atafu.

Nua, with the other pioneering teachers, voyaged to Tokelau in early 1951. The task before them was daunting. The pastors' schools had been atoll institutions for almost a century, and their programmes and procedures were quite different from those intended for the new government schools. Children began attending the pastors' schools from the age of three and many continued to attend right into their twenties, or until they married. The pupils progressed through six levels, being promoted not as they became older but as they passed set examinations. This meant that students of varying ages were at the same level. Teaching focused on the Bible and on Samoan language as the language of the Bible and the church. Some maths were taught and perhaps a bit of English, if the pastor had the ability. Aside from the Bible, there were no texts or teaching materials, and there were no proper classrooms.

The government *tulagalua* schools were supposed to have graded classes in which the students were of comparable age and achievement. Children were expected to begin attending school at five or six years and to leave school

well before they turned twenty. Bible study was not part of the curriculum but Samoan language teaching was necessary since all the teaching materials brought up from Samoa were in Samoan or English. The basic subjects taught were social science, maths and English phonics.

The changes could not be made instantaneously. Nua and Sofi divided their pupils into two groups—based on both age and previous achievements. To establish who was in which grade, she and Sofi had initially constructed a rough test and then promoted the older students as quickly as possible when they acquired basic skills. They could only slowly undo the pastors' school model, and it was not really until years later that grade level and age became aligned. Nua taught the lower/primer division, aged approximately 6-12, divided into three grades, at the village meeting house, and Sofi took the upper/*tulagalua* division, again divided into several grades, at the church meeting house in the pastor's compound. These were indeed "composite classes". They had to improvise, to work out for themselves a manageable teaching programme. For the primers, Nua explained: "All the materials and programmes came from Samoa, the workbooks came from Samoa—everything came from Samoa. I tried to teach in Tokelauan. I would read to them in Samoan and if they did not understand I would translate into Tokelauan."

One aspect of the pastor's school was retained; school hours were from 8 am to 1 pm, which accommodated the pastor's school held in the late afternoon, from about 4-6 pm, so that students could continue to study the Bible.

The village enthusiastically supported the new school. The pastor and his wife assisted the two teachers, and so did the local radio operator. The parents gave strong support and things moved along quickly. When inspectors came from Samoa they were impressed with their progress. Nua's explanation for their success was that the children were very bright, and she cited names of her early pupils who succeeded and became nurses and teachers. These pupils, in turn, would give credit to Nua for their success.

For all this work, Nua received a salary of £10 each month and Sofi received £20. The village was a good deal more generous to their teachers than the Administration was to their employees. Nua and Sofi were accommodated and provisioned by the villagers in much the same way that pastors were. Sofi lived in the pastor's compound, and Nua, though she stayed with her family, ate at the pastor's house. With the arrival of later teachers this practice was gradually discontinued, and the teachers in time came to be regarded as fellow villagers, which indeed they were. For a while they continued to receive special portions when fish and produce was distributed village-wide even when school was in recess, then only the head teacher received a special portion that he shared with the others. Finally, they were simply counted within one of the village share units just like everyone else.[16]

Sofi taught in Tokelau for four years, and in the last year went to Fakaofo while Ioata came to Atafu.[17] Before that school year began, Nua and Ioata were summoned back to Samoa to graduate in the class with which they had entered Training College. They may have had fewer years of teacher training, but then they had much more practical experience. They certainly had far more experience than the newly trained teachers who were assigned to Atafu—the first in 1953, three more in 1954, and two in 1957. All of them were men born in Atafu who had attended secondary school in Samoa and had been recruited to train as teachers.[18] It was not until 1958 that another woman joined Nua. She was the sister of one of the teachers and he had told a visiting school inspector that his sister was a Samoa College graduate, training as a teacher. The inspector virtually commanded her to go to Atafu as a teacher of oral English, particularly at the upper levels. Further women teachers were finally appointed in the early 1970s. Two of them were trained as primer teachers. At last, after nearly two decades during which Nua alone had taught all the primer classes together in the village meeting house, the three classes had different teachers and separate classrooms. Nua took the third, most advanced class.

Elia Mamoe was one of the teachers who started teaching in Atafu at the beginning of 1957. It was not long before he asked Nua to marry him, having already made a good impression on her older sister and her husband, with whom Nua was residing and who were looking out for her. Nua initially rejected his proposal. But Elia persisted and wrote to Lepaio and Aga in Samoa. Lepaio radioed to Nua wanting to know what this was all about. Nua was dumbfounded. Elia had sent the letter without her knowledge. With widespread approval she agreed to marry Elia on the condition that her parents came to Atafu for the wedding. However, the scheduled ship on which they had arranged to voyage to Atafu did not appear in Apia, and, in the event, they were not in Atafu to see Nua wed.

By the end of 1961 Nua was the mother of four children: three boys and a girl. With each child she took three weeks off and then the infants were left with either her sister or Elia's parents while she was at school. Elia's parents' house was only a few steps away from the meeting house where she still taught the primer classes, so at recess she could feed them. Nua explained that she simply could not 'abandon her job' (*tiaki te galuega*) because who else was there to do it. Furthermore, she never took a day's sick leave during her whole 34 years of service. Her dedication to the school she began, her loyalty to her village and especially its children kept her at her job. Since leaving Samoa in 1951, she had only returned for the briefest stay twice—for her graduation in 1953 and then in mid-1954 to do some observation in Samoan schools. Her only other extended stay away was her year in New Zealand on refresher leave. She related that visit in detail. I repeat the highlights (my abridged translation):

> In January 1965 I went to New Zealand, along with three scholarship students I was escorting, to take a training course and observe teacher training. After many puzzling encounters on the way, we arrived at the Wellington airport. It was a Sunday and there was no-one awaiting us. Fortunately we encountered two young Tokelau men, who first thought us to be Samoans but realised that we were Tokelau when I called out to them: "*E mea, olo mai ake* (Hey you there, would you please come over here)". The two men took us to the house of some Fakaofo relatives where we rested. Meanwhile my sister and 'brother', having learned of our arrival, had gone to the airport after we had left and were frantically trying to find us. Finally we all got together.
>
> I decided to take my training course at Tokoroa because my older brother, who had been in New Zealand for a number of years, was living there with his wife and 12 kids. When I got to Tokoroa, after several minor mishaps, I began to search for my brother with the help of the Rarotonga family with whom I was living and their friends. They inquired at their work places; I checked the school rolls where I was training, but no-one knew nor could anyone find someone with the surname Lepaio [her brother was using another surname]. It was rumoured that they had shifted to Grey Lynn, so I wrote to the address, but the letter was returned. One afternoon, a week or so later, when I was shopping in the town I recognised my sister-in-law. She immediately took me to their house and finally I found my brother—and he found me—and we stood holding hands and weeping for minutes. It turned out that my brother did not recognise my surname—though he had heard that there was a Tokelau in town who was a teacher with the surname of Mamoe. So I shifted to my brother's house and stayed for four weeks, where my husband, who had come from Tokelau to be with me for Christmas, joined us.
>
> At Christmas Elia and I returned to Wellington and I was assigned to observe teacher's training at the University. I was all set to go, when I heard of the cyclone in Tokelau. I was very alarmed for my children, so upset that I wept day and night. I went to see the people in the Islands Education office and spoke to a Māori man there, asking for arrangements to be made for me to return immediately to Tokelau. When Elia heard about this, he said he would go so I could stay; I said I would go so he could stay. In the end we both decided to return. In two days, on a Friday, the Māori man at Islands Education had everything arranged for us to leave on Monday. We returned to my sister's house and said we were leaving on Monday. She and many others tried to dissuade us because the stores were all closed for the weekend and we could not be properly farewelled and gifted, but we insisted that we were going. So we left taking back nothing. They held the boat for us in Apia and soon we were back in Atafu.

This was Nua's only visit to New Zealand. She did not want to leave Atafu again and she had ignored appeals from sister and others in New Zealand for her to come for a visit now that she was retired. Her response to them was that she wanted to "die in Atafu".

Nua said of teaching: "It is the most taxing profession (*Oi oti te galuega faigata*)." She explained that during school hours you were talking all the time, keeping the classroom under control, and looking after the children's health and welfare. After school, you had to put on the blackboard the summary of work for the next day and evaluate the progress of the day just passed. Then you must develop each week a plan of work for the scrutiny of the head teacher. She summed up: "I am unable to neglect any school work *(Hē mafai ke fakatamala he galuega o te aoga*)." Nua maintained, despite educational edicts to the contrary, that mild physical discipline is warranted in some instances. While she admitted that it is better to "teach with words", this was not always enough and you had to slap the schoolchildren's hands to get them to pay attention. She added that in this small community the situation was very different from the usual school situation where the prohibition on physical discipline was quite proper. In Atafu parents and teachers were kin and fellow villagers, and schoolchildren were being taught and disciplined by teachers who were also kin and neighbours, and frequently disciplined them outside school.

There is a further story that Nua told about Dr Logologo's son, who was for many years her teaching colleague. Now it might seem surprising that when the head teacher (the most senior MALE teacher in age and service) was on leave, her childhood wrestling opponent was appointed to act in his place, though he was slightly junior in age and very junior in service to Nua. It was not considered unusual by the NZ education authorities who made decisions in such matters or the male teachers who had come to share their biases. He was the next senior teacher to the head teacher. Nua's story was about an incident when he was acting head teacher.

> During this period there was a visit from Mr Philbert of Islands Education to inspect the school, and, as was customary in preparing for such visits, the children in each class were trained to say 'good morning' in English to the visitor. Nua by chance discovered that the acting head teacher had taught his class to greet the visitor 'Good morning, Mr Teapot', and corrected their greeting before it was too late.
>
> The role of the head teacher on these occasions was to go out to the ship, greet the inspector, and escort him to shore. The acting head made much his responsibility for escorting Mr Philbert from the ship to shore. However, in the event, he was so delayed in bringing the school visitor ashore that the schoolchildren had become impatient, had *takape* 'broken out' of their classrooms and were running around outside, rather than sitting quietly in their places ready to say 'Good morning, Mr Philbert'. Instead of explaining to Mr Philbert that they had been very late coming ashore, the acting head told their visiting inspector that Nua was responsible for the absence of discipline.

Nua laughs—what else might she have expected.

Recall that when Sofi Pua left Atafu his status as senior teacher was conferred upon his male replacement, Ioata, although on the grounds of experience and qualifications he was in no way senior to Nua. For the New Zealand education officers in Apia it was inconceivable that a woman might be in charge of a school. Nua remarked that it was the same in Western Samoa with the comment: "*Hēki ON te mea tēnei—ke kave he fafine ke pule* (It simply was not ON—for a woman to be put in charge (of a school)." Once established that head teachers are men, the situation perpetuated itself. When Ioata returned to Western Samoa in 1956, the eldest male teacher of those who had recently arrived was made head teacher, and when he was on leave, the next eldest, Nua's old wrestling adversary, was appointed acting head teacher, irrespective of the obvious fact that Nua was the longest serving and most experienced teacher. Her male colleagues relied upon her judgement and benefited from her experience, but imbued with the bias of New Zealand educators could never consider that a woman might have senior status at the school.[19]

It is ironic that she started the school, that she devoted 34 years to it, introducing hundreds of Atafu children to schooling—to reading, writing and numbers, and preparing them for the male teachers of the standard classes, yet the only status position she ever held was that of "supervisor of junior classes".[20] Nonetheless, it was always Nua who was consulted when something was afoot, Nua who was always asked to plan things, to fill in, and she invariably did. As her fellow villagers express it: She was *te ivi tū o te aoga* (the backbone of the school) for over 30 years—the "mother" of the Atafu School.

Nua retired as a teacher at the age of 60 in 1984. She was asked to go back for a few more years but decided that after all she had done enough. People in Atafu spoke often of what she had done. They had fond memories of their first teacher, they recognised her commitment to teaching and for many she has been a role model, the inspiration for their own achievements.

* * *

Kula's and Nua's stories contain comparable episodes and themes, and placing them side by side serves to highlight their commonalties irrespective of their different life experiences and professional careers. Together they say things about Tokelau people and their culture that a single story would not tell.

When they chose their professional careers, there were really only two fields for Tokelau people to choose from—medicine and teaching. In each of these professions, certain careers were gender specific and the higher status positions were always assigned to men. Women were nurses and men were doctors, and doctors were superior to and much more highly paid than

nurses. Only women taught very young children, though they might teach older ones too, but women were not in charge of schools as head teachers or principals. These, of course, were unwritten rules of *papālagi* professions of the time, but they could come to be the unconscious expectations of those that such professionals served. In contemplating their stories and what other Tokelau people say about them, I have asked the question: Did Tokelau people devalue Kula and Nua in relation to their male counterparts because they were women? My answer is unequivocally: No. Even though their remuneration was smaller, even though they were not given the top positions, they were more admired, more highly regarded than their male counterparts. What they did and what they had done is the basis of their renown.

My question above may be widened to ask: Did Tokelau people consider females less able than males? Again, I believe not. Kula and Nua both speak of their mothers as role models, citing their meticulousness, their Christian devotion, their generosity, etc., and they both tell of how their parents, in particular their fathers, urged and encouraged them in their education and careers. In this regard, it is notable that they both had brothers, but their fathers specifically arranged for their daughters' schooling, and were obviously proud of their achievements.

Both of these women took up challenges very early in their careers. Kula virtually ran the health services in Fakaofo and Nukunonu, and established how things must be done in the hospital for staff and patients alike. Nua brought the Atafu School into being, introducing hundreds of children to the skills of reading, writing and numbers. In meeting these challenges, both Kula and Nua engaged enthusiastic community support—support that was given out of respect and admiration, with the knowledge that these two women were devoting themselves to the service of the village and the welfare of all Tokelau. There was never any suggestion that they were seeking esteem and status for themselves.

Kula and Nua were pioneers, and as such role models for those that joined them in their professions. They inspired young women to become nurses, and young women and men to become teachers. They trained them and they counselled them. In this regard they truly are founders. As pioneers and founders, as professional exemplars, as extraordinary people they are celebrated in Tokelau.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When the instigators of this volume approached me for a contribution, I demurred because there seemed no way that I could provide a historical portrait given that the historical literature and documentation on Tokelau women is virtually non-existent.

I had met hundreds, perhaps over a thousand, Tokelau women in the past 30 years or so, and had many close friends among them, so I toyed with the idea of constructing a portrait of a generic Tokelau woman, but then when I tried this I discovered that my knowledge of my friends and acquaintances as individuals precluded this possibility—the separate "real" women were lively and interesting, but an homogenised "Tokelau woman" was flat. I then proposed a portrait based on Kula's own story—she seemed historical enough to qualify. It was only after I had spoken with Kula, and drafted her story, that I was reminded that Nua was of exactly the same age and decided to create a dual portrait.

Over 15 years have passed since I discussed their lives with Kula and Nua, and since Kula's son and the son of one of Nua's "brothers" of her childhood approved my renditions of their stories. I am grateful to my two subjects for their ready willingness to tell their stories and to the many other Tokelau people who added their recollections and comments.

NOTES

1. Despite Tokelau appeals, the New Zealand officials had refused to become involved in education, leaving schooling solely to the missions (see Hooper, Huntsman and Kalolo 1991). The Tokelau medical staff, serving all three atolls, consisted of one Fiji-trained "Native Medical Practitioner" and three male "dressers" who dispensed patent medicines and applied bandages.
2. For a much more comprehensive account of the foregoing, see Huntsman and Hooper 1996.
3. For a fuller description of Tokelau gender roles, see Huntsman and Hooper 1975 and 1996: 49-50, 109-121.
4. I knew Kula and Nua for over two decades, and have not only my own experiences with them to draw upon but also the recollections and stories of others. Their own accounts were recorded from conversations with each of them in August 1997. This essay does not incorporate all that they told me, or indeed all that I know about them, but the material included has been passed as correct and appropriate for telling.
5. Logologo Apinelu, a Fiji-trained Native Medical Practitioner, who was "the doctor" for all Tokelau from 1917 until after the Second World War.
6. I have composed this story from Kula's own taped account, supplemented by our earlier and subsequent discussions of the event. Most of the words are Kula's own as I have translated them, since her account and our discussions were in Tokelauan, except for some medical queries on my part and clarification on hers. No anonymity is compromised here, since the essence of the story is well known in Tokelau and indeed beyond. Nonetheless, I have avoided personal names of those involved, aside from Kula of course.
7. The story of the mysterious disappearance of the *Joyita* at the end of 1955 and its rediscovery after five and a half weeks "drifting and waterlogged, without any trace" of her crew or passengers will not be retold here (see *Matagi Tokelau* 1991: 131-33, McKay 1968: 152-55, Wright 2002).

8. In 1971 I had firsthand experience of Kula's resourceful coping. Unexpectedly and unprepared she had been ordered to remain in Nukunonu because the doctor there was very ill and had to leave, and there were simultaneous outbreaks of hepatitis and chicken pox. She decided that we would occupy the maternity ward, and that the main ward would be divided by an imaginary line—the chicken pox patients at one end and the hepatitis patients at the other. Kula set down the rules firmly for the mothers and others attending the patients and the infections did not cross that imaginary line. She organised provisioning of the ward; food was provided and prepared in rotation. All this having been settled, Kula dealt with all the regular calls—two deliveries and a miscarriage, numerous cuts and abrasions, and a young man who had drunk unwisely. The hospital was packed, but nonetheless it was a happy and orderly place under Kula's firm control.
9. While Kula had little objection to living and serving in the other atolls, and in fact enjoyed coming to know her kin and the others in Nukunonu and Atafu, these shifts were distressing each time simply because she had to travel by sea. Kula had no problem with small craft on the lagoon, but on large sea-going vessels she experienced extreme seasickness. This was one time that Kula needed others to look after her.
10. When a Tokelau National Council of Women was established in 1986, Kula was at the forefront, moderating and negotiating and generally keeping things on track.
11. Of course there were costs in tuition and fees, and Kula paid most of them out of her small salary, while Logotasi's father made small contributions from time to time. After all, Logotasi was his son and bore his name as his surname. But Kula remained Fiaola, the daughter of her father.
12. He was the second son of Eli Jennings, the reputed "owner" and proprietor of Olohega who had settled there in 1856 (see Hooper 1975). Daniel's elder brother, also named Eli, succeeded his father as proprietor, while Daniel (a.k.a. Tanielu or Misikosi) pursued commercial activities elsewhere that benefited the family enterprise at Olohega.
13. Her mother, Alisa, was a great granddaughter of the first Eli Jennings and Daniel was her father's father's brother. Her father was Heo Samuelu who had been recruited as a labourer at Olohega by Jennings and whose birthplace was Luangiua/Ontong Java. Alisa and Heo had two other children besides Aga: a daughter who married an Atafu man, and a son, Samuelu, whose second wife was Naomi (see Kula's story).
14. One day when the pupils were lined up in the schoolyard, someone threw a stone that hit her in the left eye. Her eye was indeed seriously injured and there was no remedy. When a party of men came from Fakaofo in the late 1930s to work in Samoa in order to raise money for their church, they insisted that the only way her eye would become right was if she returned to stay with her birth-mother's family in Fakaofo, as if the injury was related to some ill-will from her mother's family because they were not recognised. Lepaio utterly rejected this solution, as did Aga and Nua's "parents" in Atafu.

15. During this period Nukunonu was not included in the government's schooling programme, even though it combined religious and secular education. Following the Second World War Nukunonu benefited from a much improved mission school when Father Alex McDonald responded to the long-expressed desires of the people to establish a "real" school with instruction in Tokelauan and English. This school quickly far surpassed the long established pastors' schools in Atafu and Fakaofo, and so was not superseded by a government school until nearly two decades later.
16. Village or *inati* distributions, primarily of communal catches of fish, are frequent in Tokelau (see Huntsman and Hooper 1996: 76-83). Everyone in the village, by an elaborate but efficient system of allocation, receives an equal share, except for visitors who receive special portions. Pastors have always been considered visitors, as has the doctor, and the pioneering schoolteachers were considered likewise.
17. Sofi did not regularly speak Tokelauan, but he understood it. Many years later, when he lived in Auckland, he would often attend Tokelau gatherings and speak in Tokelauan.
18. They had come to be at school in Samoa by diverse and often remarkable circumstances. For examples, Nua's childhood wrestling opponent was there because his father was then doctoring in Samoa and Nua's future husband was there because an American serviceman, who had been stationed in Atafu late in the Second World War, paid for his education. That these particular men were selected for teacher training had little to do with their educational achievements. They just happened to have the schooling that qualified them to train as teachers.
19. Nua had retired when a woman was finally appointed principal of the Atafu school. She was the student who had been ordered to Atafu to teach oral English in 1958, and had been recognised as a particularly distinguished student when she was training.
20. Salary inevitably reflects status, and Nua's salary, despite her years of service, was never as high as that of several of her male colleagues.

ABSTRACT

Two Tokelau women, both born in 1924, were pioneers in the provision of social services (health and education) in the atolls from the early 1950s. Their stories of their lives, supplemented by accounts of their patients, students and colleagues, form the material from which my brief biographies are constructed. They were celebrated in Tokelau, but never fully recognised in the same way by those New Zealand officials who employed and paid them.

Keywords: Tokelau, gender bias, women's roles, schooling, health services

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WHĀEA BETTY WARK: FROM UNCERTAIN BEGINNINGS TO HONOURED COMMUNITY WORKER [1]

HELENE CONNOR
Unitec, Auckland

Figure 1. Betty as viewers saw her in the Television New Zealand documentary, *Give Me a Love*, produced by William (Bill) Saunders, August 1986. She is standing outside the entrance to Arohanui Trust, Auckland. Private collection of Wark *whānau*.

Elizabeth (Betty) Wark, QSM, was born on 6 June 1924 at Omanaia, Hokianga, Northland, Aotearoa/New Zealand. She had *whakapapa* 'genealogy' connections to both Māori and Pākehā 'New Zealander of European descent' although she identified more as Māori. Her iwi 'tribe' was Ngā Puhi.

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Betty married twice and had five sons: Brian, Danny, Conrad, Robert and Gary. During her life time she saw the birth of ten grandchildren and five great grandchildren. Whāea Betty or Ma Betty, as she was more commonly known, spent a large part of her adult life providing assistance to the disadvantaged in Auckland through a variety of grassroots initiatives and political activism.

BETTY'S EARLY LIFE, 1924-1944

Betty Wark knew very little about the circumstances of her birth: "I was told that I was born under a plum tree at Omanaia at around 9.00 pm and that a big black dog happened to come along and was my mother's sole support throughout her labour" (Connor 2006: 115). As a child, Betty did not know the identity of either of her parents. Her mother was Māori of Ngā Puhi descent and she later learned that her father was both Māori and Pākehā but tended to identify as Pākehā. They were not married and Betty's mum was turned out of the house for falling pregnant.

Betty was raised with several Māori families as a *tamaiti whāngai* 'foster child' and was known by the name of one of her initial foster familes: Te Wake. Betty was unclear as to her mother's exact relationship to the Te Wake *whānau* 'family' but there must have been one for her to be particularly fostered by them. Fostering was a customary extension of the Māori practice of *whanaungatanga* 'extended family' and communal living, and was a relatively common occurrence for many Māori families (Metge 1995). Betty spoke of having an overwhelming desire, as a child, to meet her biological parents around whom she had created an elaborate fantasy. She did not meet them until her early 20s and she was not familiar with her ancestral *whakapapa* until her mid-life.

Betty's sense of dislocation as a child reveals both an individual personal and a generational cultural loss of identity. Born in an era when the government of Aotearoa/New Zealand encouraged the assimilation of Māori and Pākehā, it was also a time when remnants of the commonly held belief that Māori were doomed to extinction still existed (Ballara 1986, Belich 2001, Sorrenson 1977). Belich wrote: "As the twentieth century opened, most Pakeha and some Māori believed that the Māori people were destined for extinction. At best, they were thought to face complete assimilation" (Belich 2001: 191).

As the 20th century progressed Māori were acquiring immunity from European introduced diseases and the Māori population began to increase, although Māori infant mortality rates remained high (King 2003: 325). With the advent of the First World War (1914-1918) Māori leaders such as Maui Pomare, Te Rangi Hiroa and Apirana Ngata encouraged Māori men to enlist believing Māori had earned the right to equal citizenship status with Pākehā (King 2003: 333). Māori ex-servicemen were hopeful that the

conditions of wartime equality with Pākehā soldiers would continue. But King (2003: 334) noted that this was not the case. Legislation forbade the sale of alcohol to Māori and they were excluded from financial assistance for farm development and few were eligible for rehabilitation assistance. The discourses of assimilation underpinned by Governor Hobson's much quoted phrase, "*He iwi tahi tatou*—we are one people" (Orange 1990: 21) at the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi on 4 February 1840 had not translated into equality between Māori and Pākehā. Assimilation signified mono-culturalism and legalised imperialism where Māori were to become brown Pākehā if they were to survive.

Growing up in such a divided world it was understandable that Betty's sense of cultural identity was fragmented. She knew she was of Māori descent but, as a child, her knowledge of things Māori was limited. Although she grew up in the predominantly Māori area of the Hokianga, and was exposed to Māori language and culture in a peripheral way through such practices as listening to and repeating *karakia* 'prayers' in Māori and attending functions at local *marae* 'meeting place', the dominant culture of her childhood was European.

Betty's experiences of cultural alienation were, however, not necessarily typical for Māori who were raised in the Hokianga district in the early 20th century. Prominent Māori leader Dame Whina Cooper (1895-1994) who was born in 1895, 29 years earlier than Betty, was raised in a family with strong Māori values. Whina was profoundly influenced by her father Heremia Te Wake, who was a community leader in the settlement of Te Karaka in the northern Hokianga. Heremia was also a catechist for the Catholic Church which was established in the district in 1838 (King 1983). Whina Cooper "was a woman of extraordinary vision and energy who accomplished a great deal: the introduction of land development into the Hokianga, the launching of the Māori Women's Welfare League, the building of Te Unga Waka Catholic Marae in Auckland and the organisation of the Māori Land March" (King 1983: 7).

Betty's early childhood was not immersed in *tikanga* Māori 'Māori cultural practices' as was the childhood of Whina Cooper, even though one of Betty's initial foster families was connected to Whina. Betty's memories of her early childhood with the Te Wake *whānau* were patchy and fragmented; however, she was eventually taken in by Hau Te Wake, older brother of Dame Whina:

> Hau Te Wake was a very strict man and he had very little to do with the children because he was out in the forest most of the time. We only ever saw him at night. I don't know how I came to live in the Waipoua Forest with Hau Te Wake. There was a stream at the bottom of the garden. We had to wash there every night. Bread was made in a camp oven, buried. You dug a part by the

> open fire place and you put charcoal on the top. We often would go out to the beach and put up a tent and collect *kaimoana* 'seafood', such as mussels and *pāua* [*Halliotis*] and then they were dried in the chimney back at the house.

Betty's sense of identity as Māori when she was growing up was complex. While she was exposed to Māori culture and language and was fostered by several influential Māori families she nevertheless felt disconnected from her Māori *whakapapa*. This could have been, in part, because of the kind of racism which viewed persons of mixed origin in negative ways. Betty was frequently called "half-caste" and so felt she was neither Māori or Pākehā. These epithets she heard as a child were both negative and confusing. Then too she was frequently tormented with racist remarks as a Māori which made her ashamed of her Māori heritage.

The label "illegitimate" further compounded her sense of not belonging and being different. She was often called "bastard" and "no-good Māori bastard", and in her child's mind she associated being Māori as being bad. Her mother, she was told, was bad, and so, too, was she. Not all of her foster families were kind and attentive. Betty was subjected to emotional, physical and sexual abuse as she grew up. As with all children living in an abusive situation, Betty was intrinsically less powerful than the adults who were entrusted with her care. She was not in a position where she could exercise choice and leave the situation. "I didn't belong and I had no identity", is how she described her feelings of alienation during this time.

Betty's sense of Māori identity and connection to her *whakapapa* came about through an accumulation of learning akin to an apprenticeship. She had to learn about the history and traditions of her people from the place of an outsider. It might be inferred, however, that she had always had a deep emotional and spiritual connection to the land and to her *tupuna* 'ancestors'. As a little girl she would retreat to what she termed her secret *maunga* 'mountain' and lie in hidden little crevices until she felt revitalised. Reflecting back to that time she talked of being "guided" to experience the *wairua* 'spiritualty' of the earth, of *Papatūānuku* 'Earth Mother'. Tapping into the spiritual world is an inevitable aspect of acquiring Māori identity. However, during the colonisation period of Aotearoa/New Zealand, Christianisation was generally intolerant of Māori spirituality and consequently many aspects of Māori spirituality were either suppressed or lost (Ward 1978).

Catholicism was particularly deeply rooted in Northland. It was there that many of the first Irish Catholic settlers to New Zealand made their home (King 1997). In January 1838, the Frenchman Jean-Baptiste Pompallier arrived in the Hokianga as a young bishop, and many Māori were converted to Catholicism. Māori Catholic leaders, such as Heremia Te Wake, father of

Dame Whina Cooper and part of the *whanau* in which Betty was fostered as a child, kept the faith alive by instructing children in the beliefs and prayers of the Church. In 1886 Father John Becker who was known as Pa Hoani arrived. He was primarily concerned with spiritual matters and did not attempt to interfere with the specifically Māori aspects of the community in which he became an accepted member (King 1983). A member of the order of Saint Joseph's Foreign Missionary Society, generally referred to as the Mill Hills, Becker and later Mill Hill priests became proficient in Māori language and lived with and identified with their Māori congregations (King 1997).

By the time Betty was born in 1924, Catholicism was an integral element of *māoritanga* 'Māori ways of thinking and acting' in the Hokianga region:

> I'm Māori and I'm Catholic. In my early years it was the Mill Hill priests who were the main influence on my faith but it was the nuns at Saint Joseph's who were my role models. I used to be quite emotional. If I did any wrong or thought anything wrong, I'd race to the chapel to be forgiven! I learned the answering of the mass in Latin. I tried my best to please them – to be a good Catholic.

Although Betty's early childhood experiences of what it meant to be Māori were contradictory and mostly negative, these experiences were contested and challenged when she won a scholarship and became a pupil at Saint Joseph's Māori Girls' College in Napier in 1938. Betty's experiences of Saint Joseph's were positive and affirming. For the first time in her life she felt safe and was able to join in the frivolities of youth with the other girls at the school. The nuns nurtured her and gave her a new sense of identity. She reminisced that they taught her that "being Maori was something to be proud of and they taught me that all children are pure in the eyes of God".

Māoritanga, for Betty, meant feeling connected to other Māori. It meant feeling complete and this is how she felt at Saint Joseph's. The irony of such an assertion is, however, that the Māori boarding schools of the era in which Betty attended (1938-1941) have been highly criticised for undermining a Māori cultural identity by promoting a policy of assimilation (Simon 1998). Such criticisms are well-founded as an examination of the original motivation for establishing the Church boarding schools reveals the "civilising and assimilating mission" that underpinned them was to "ensure regular attendance and Christian habits" (Barrington and Beaglehole 1974: 43-45).

Nevertheless, Betty enjoyed the special character of Saint Joseph's Māori Girls' College and she enjoyed meeting other Māori Catholic girls from different parts of the country:

> There would have been about 90 young girls from all parts of New Zealand, from the South Island, the East Coast, up North. I made some really good friends during my four years at Saint Joseph's. I wasn't what you would call a bright scholar but I enjoyed being down there because I got a lot of loving from the nuns. They were very good to me and really not having an actual family they became my family.

Betty's sense of belonging at Saint Joseph's Māori Girls' College and the love she felt for the nuns that cared for her can in part explain the apparent contradiction between the development of her *māoritanga* within the context of a post-colonial schooling system that sought to assimilate Māori into the dominant Pākehā culture. In Betty's case leaving an abusive situation for the safety of St Joseph's gave her the opportunity to grow and find a new sense of identity. The nuns seemed to have allowed space for their Māori pupils to affirm their Māori culture within the confines of a curriculum that actively suppressed it. Certainly, Betty felt affirmed as Māori even though Māori language and Māori *tikanga* 'culture' were not taught in any depth at the school during the period Betty attended. Nevertheless, it was at Saint Joseph's that Betty realised she could identify as both Māori and Pākehā and that she could move between two worlds. Betty credited the nuns at Saint Joseph's with giving her a strong moral base and pride in herself as a Māori Catholic woman: "The nuns were all strong women and I've found a lot of women that have been to Catholic colleges are very strong women. They had a basis for a good life – they were given a good foundation".[2]

At the end of 1941 Betty was 17 years old. The Second World War had begun and it was a time to leave school and find a job. Betty recalled: "When I left school, Sister Crescentia got me a job at Wairoa Hospital. It was the beginning of the war and you became a nurse or a teacher or something like that." Betty entered the workforce at a time when the war was modifying what was appropriate work for women. Industrial conscription or "man-power" was introduced by regulation in 1942 and initially covered all women born in 1922 and 1923 (Montgomerie 1992). Born in 1924, Betty was not eligible for registration at this time, although by the end of the war she was. Sister Crescentia, however, pre-empted the National Service Department by securing Betty a job in nursing which encompassed both the patriotic narrative of serving one's country and the domestic narrative of feminine self-sacrifice. Betty was inducted into nursing in 1942:

> I did six months nurse training at Wairoa Hospital but I didn't complete my training. I was quite good at the theory but I wasn't very good at the practical. I didn't like to see people hurt. If I saw anybody badly injured I'd pass out. And I didn't like all the dirty jobs and all the cleaning. I didn't like giving

> enemas and cleaning bed pans. Anyway I left nursing and got a job as a housekeeper to a Doctor Harvey.

Betty worked for the Harveys for about one year before going to work for another family, the McFarlanes, in Napier. On her evenings off Betty would attend dances and, like many other young New Zealand women, she found the American servicemen attentive and exciting. She met Charles Turner, an American marine, at a dance. He was her first love and she relished every moment with him and the escape he represented from the daily drudgery of her work. Soon after meeting Charles she left her job with the McFarlanes and went nurse aiding at the Pukeora Sanatorium in Waipukurau so he could visit her more easily. Betty later moved to Wellington and took a job with the Army in Base Records. Charles continued to court Betty and they became engaged, and, as was frequently the case with romances during the war, in 1944 Betty became pregnant.

MARRIAGE AND MOTHERHOOD 1945-1976

The prevalent gender ideology in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 1940s condemned and punished women's sexual activity except within the institution of marriage, which was a deeply embedded desire for the majority of women (Matthews 1984). Yet, during the Second World War, many New Zealand women became pregnant to American servicemen. Some married their lovers, some did not (Bioletti 1989: 77). Charles and Betty had plans to wed and Betty was looking forward to a new life with Charles in the United States. Tragically, before they married, Charles was killed in action at the battle of Guadalcanal. Over 50 years later Betty still found it very difficult to talk about this time of intense sorrow.

When Betty found herself alone and pregnant she was frightened and felt totally unprepared for the responsibility of motherhood. She did, however, receive some support from the U.S. Armed Forces They helped her with clothes for the baby and wrote a letter to Mary, one of her foster mothers.

> I was scared to contact Mary but the army contacted her and I got a telegram saying bring the baby home. The army paid for my fare back—picked me up and put me on the train, gave me some money and sent me up north.

Betty left her son Brian with Mary and went to Auckland in search of work. She held a variety of jobs including a ward's maid at Auckland Hospital, a cook, a waitress and filing at Farmer's Trading Company.

> I don't know whether I was very happy because as a rural person coming to the city, I found it very hard. I guess I understand why these young people

> who come from the rural areas find it hard to live in the city. I didn't find it exciting. I found it a little frightening.

After the war the urbanisation of Māori increased as many Māori moved into small towns and cities to find work. Betty was part of this influx of Māori urbanisation. In 1945 there were around 4,903 Māori living in Auckland and by 1951, there were 7,621. The process of urbanisation continued to intensify and by the 1960s, Māori had become a predominantly urban people (King 1981: 283).

During this time she had her second significant relationship, with Henry Smith, an Englishman. He wanted to marry Betty but she refused and he returned to England. Henry was the father of Betty's second son, Danny, who was born in 1948. He was fostered in Waihi within the extended family. Betty lived in Waihi for two years following Danny's birth and then returned to Auckland in 1950. It was then that she met and married a Canadian in 1952. When Betty decided not to emigrate to Canada, her husband returned to Canada alone, leaving his wife and their infant son, Conrad, behind. Betty was entitled to a deserted wife's benefit so she was able to keep baby Conrad with her. She found rooms in a boarding house in Grafton, an inner city suburb of Auckland, and set about making a home for herself and her son. While living in Grafton, Betty met Jim Wark who would become her second husband and the father of two further sons. Robert was born in 1959 and Gary in 1961. Jim Wark provided the security Betty craved and together they created the home and family Betty had yearned for all her life. After a number of moves they settled in Herne Bay, an inner city suburb of Auckland, in the 1970s.

In the early days of their relationship Betty and Jim were happy together, but by her late thirties Betty was growing more into what she termed "her own person". She became more involved with her community work and there was an inevitable conflict between her family life and her public life. Betty explained:

> Jim was a good man. We stayed together as a family unit until I found my Māoriness. I got involved in the Māori Community Centre during the 1960s and the time of the urban renewal. Jim didn't understand what was happening, although he was very sympathetic towards Māori and knew a lot about Māori history.

Betty termed her community work and activism, her "heart politics". It was a term which represented her courage in overcoming her fears and self-doubt. It also represented her involvement in community grassroots initiatives and the feelings of connectedness she felt with the people and the causes she became involved with. Her strength and commitment came from

the heart. Betty became immersed in a variety of community projects such as the Freemans Bay Advisory Committee which assisted with temporary accommodation for the working class tenants who had lost their homes to urban renewal, a process that demolished old, run-down homes in the Freemans Bay area and replaced them with council flats. She was also a founding member of the Tenants' Protection Association formed in 1972.

As Betty's heart politics evolved so, too, did her identity as Māori. She was an active member of the Ponsonby branch of the Māori Women's Welfare League and it was here she found a deep connection of spirit and mind. Although not necessarily connected by kinship she felt a real sense of *whānau*. She developed very deep and special bonds with many of the *kuia* 'female elders' at the centre.

> I used to go up to a place in St Marys Bay Road where the meetings were held and there were a lot of beautiful elderly women there: Mrs Edmonds, Mrs Tai, Mrs Ruby Smith. They kind of supported me, taught me, and they knew where I was coming from and they were very, very supportive in teaching me, not so much to speak Māori but to understand what Māori was all about.

Betty found a strong sense of Māori community at the Māori Community Centre in Ponsonby and with the Māori Women's Welfare League and the Māori Catholic Marae, Te Unga Waka at Epsom.[3] Hoani Waititi Marae and other urban *marae* initiatives also marked the starting point for a new wave of Māori development which Betty and women such as Letty Brown, a prominent Māori woman leader in West Auckland, were involved in. Letty's vision was to develop a Māori community where *tamariki* 'children' could grow up together and feel part of a Māori social order and Māori education initiatives such as *kohanga reo* 'language nests' would have a place so Māori children could be taught their own language and culture (Harris 2002: 115).

Betty also became interested in prisoners' rights and prison reform and the work of Ana Tia, a well-known Māori woman who tutored prisoners in *kapa haka* 'Māori cultural performance'.

In 1974 Betty helped set up Arohanui Incorporated, a community-based organisation which provided housing and assistance to young persons referred from the courts, prisons, Social Welfare and other sources. In 1976 Betty left her marital home and moved into one of the Arohanui Trust hostels as a house-mother, though she maintained an enduring friendship with Jim Wark for the remainder of her life. When Betty left the marriage, her three younger sons were no longer overly dependent on her and Jim. Conrad was aged twenty-four and had already left home; Robert and Gary were aged seventeen and fifteen respectively. Betty maintained very close contact with Jim and the boys, and her youngest son Gary eventually joined his mother in her work at Arohanui.

AROHANUI AND PUBLIC RECOGNITION 1976—2001

Arohanui was formed as a community response to a community problem. The main focus for Betty and the other trustees and workers at Arohanui was to maintain a positive environment for the residents - to create a home. One of Betty's closet work colleagues during the 1970s and 1980s was Fred Ellis. Fred and Betty would patrol the streets during the winter nights taking creamed mussel soup and scones to "street kids", urging them to make contact with Arohanui. Many would and were either reunited with *whanau* 'family' or alternative accommodation was found for them.

As Arohanui grew and began applying for government funding, the Trust also began offering formalised programmes such as literacy and numeracy programmes. In addition Arohanui strengthened its Māori culture and language programmes and introduced some innovative health and exercise programmes which used Eastern martial arts and Māori weaponry training. Betty maintained an avid interest in alternative learning and ways to turn Arohanui residents on to education. She also maintained an interest in reviving traditional Māori models of teaching, and learning about new developments within Māoridom. Betty's openness to exploring and trialling alternative education also extended to investigating alternative treatments for drug and alcohol addiction. Over the years a large proportion of Arohanui's residents had problems with addiction and the abuse of solvents, drugs and alcohol. Various programmes were investigated to assist the residents including the Scientology programme, Narcanon, which appeared to offer some practical and productive solutions.

Betty's growing media profile publicised her work and widened her networks, and she became skilled at gaining publicity for causes dear to her heart politics. In February 1976 there was wide media coverage of the occupation of Tole Street Reserve in Ponsonby by tent dwellers, a protest organised by Betty, which succeeded in dramatising housing issues and securing further hostel accommodation. Housing the homeless and utilising buildings to their full extent became a passion:

> I was very interested in what the Auckland City Council was doing as far as housing, jobs and things like that and I'd frequent a lot of their monthly meetings and I got pretty well known down there for what I did. I was complaining about the houses in Freemans Bay where people paid high rents to absent landlords.

Betty's commitment to ordinary working class people on lower and moderate incomes and her involvement in the local affairs of the Freemans Bay and Ponsonby communities led her to stand for election on the Auckland City Council. Betty served on the Auckland City Council from 1986 to 1989.

Betty's main area of strength was seen as working with people and housing issues:

> Betty was very active on housing issues, not simply in relation to ACC issues, but to central government issues as well, on housing policy and she had built a reputation as a person who was not a theoretician but as somebody who worked consistently over a long period of time providing real assistance to people. So it was that kind of *mana* that she developed in the community based on experience. Her forte was working with people. She was consistently there assisting people and that was one of her major qualities (Bruce Hucker, pers. comm.).

Betty was 63 years old when she stood for Council. At a time when most of her peers were thinking about retirement she had taken on another challenge. She was never completely comfortable working within the established structures and restraints of Council and often felt isolated as the only Māori woman on the Council at the time.

* * *

The historical and social context of Betty's evolving sense of political activism and her "heart politics" was the Māori Renaissance movement of the 1970s which brought about a dramatic revival of Māori culture. Many of the initiatives came from radical urban groups such as those Betty was involved in. Pressure groups such as the Tenants' Protection Association, the People's Union and Freemans Bay Advisory Committee pressed for equality between Māori and Pākehā at all levels of public policy. For Māori involved in such groups, one of the outcomes was an assertion of Māori identity and pride after experiencing the debilitating effects of post-war Māori urban migration. The Pākehā-dominated, mono-cultural society was being challenged, and Māori concerns around the Treaty of Waitangi and loss of land were brought to the forefront of New Zealand's political environment.

For Betty, there were a number of powerful and frequently contradictory forces which helped forge her identity as Māori. Throughout childhood she had experienced considerable shame and alienation and what Scheff (1994) refers to as the shame/pride loop in terms of her cultural sense of self and her emotional self. She was however, strong enough to transcend that place of powerlessness and vulnerability and she was able to contest and overcome the negative stereotyping and spurious criticisms she had been subjected to. Indeed, Betty not only survived these difficulties, she triumphed over them.

When reflecting upon what drove Betty to undertake her community work with such passion and vigour it is important to remember that she began her life from a place that served to marginalise and disempower her. She not only

survived the persistent undermining of her cultural identity and the racism she experienced, she also survived physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse and a childhood virtually devoid of stability and love. As is very common with survivors of abuse there was an enormous amount of self-blame. "I would wonder what I had done to deserve being treated the way I was. I never felt I was a good person". The survivor narrative that permeates Betty's life story, together with the driving force of anger, provides an insight into what motivated and drove her to commit so much of her personal energy to the community work which brought her public acclaim. A woman who wished to remain anonymous and had worked with Betty during the 1970s gives witness to this anger in the following description: "She was consumed with rage—she was angry—manipulative and very strong. She seemed to have a psychic or spiritual awareness and knew how to control a situation. She knew her power."

Her rage fuelled an acute sense of social injustice. She was motivated by a politics straight from the heart. For Betty, the dynamic force of anger was transformative; not only for herself but for those young people who were cared for at Arohanui. She came to recognise how anger motivated her and she recognised the young people in her care shared similar hurts:

> Looking back at my life I had a hard life but if I hadn't gone through that I wouldn't be surviving today. So it has balanced off. It has balanced off. I still get a bit sad about some of the things but I don't use it as a crutch. I don't use it as a crutch. And that's why with the young people at Arohanui I know how they feel because a lot of them have been through exactly the same kind of thing.

Betty' story conforms to the parable of the triumph of the human soul in the face of adversity. She was a woman who endured appalling hardship and abuse as a child yet she was able to draw on these experiences in order to help transform the lives of others.

In January 1990, Pat Booth, of *North and South* magazine wrote a series on prominent figures termed "Living Treasures" and featured Betty Wark. The metaphor of a living treasure was an apt one for someone as remarkable as Betty Wark. She was indeed a *taonga* 'treasure' to the hundreds of *rangatahi* 'youth' she offered refuge to under the umbrella of the Arohanui Trust. Betty, although well used to accolades, was, nevertheless, modest about her work and accomplishments. To be described as a "living treasure" was something of an anathema to her. She preferred the focus to be on her *mahi* 'work' and not on her personally. While Betty wore the accolade of "Living Treasure" with modesty and humility, others felt the honour was just and fitting. Dame Catherine Tizard who was Mayor of Auckland at the time Betty was on the Auckland City Council told me:

> She certainly made a contribution and always voted along the lines of her conscience. She did try to bring a Māori perspective to Council long before there were any Māori advisory committees and she forced us to see things from a Māori perspective. Thank God for people like Betty Wark who do what they can do without expecting reward and without worrying about what other people think about them and the way they do it—she just got on and did it (pers. comm. Dame Catherine Tizard, 3 September 1996).

Of all the awards Betty received she was particularly humbled by the award of the Queen's Service Medal in 1986; the Investiture of which was awarded in person by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II who was touring New Zealand at the time. In 1996 Betty won top honours in the Trustees Executors Senior Achiever's Award. The award recognised 50 years of voluntary services to the community. The award was sponsored by the Retired Persons' Association. When interviewed by the *New Zealand Herald* on 2 October 1996, Betty jokingly said she regretted she could not qualify for membership of the organisation behind the award: "Retirement, what's that?" she asked.

Retirement eluded Betty. The work she began in her thirties and forties in response to seeing those homeless young men in Freemans Bay took her in a direction that would eventually become her path or vocation—her "soul work". The concept of "soul work" referred to meaningful occupation or mission into which we are beckoned. Betty believed she had been "called" to her work, much as the nuns at St Josephs had been called to their vocation as Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions. "Soul work" expresses our unique essence and embraces the full dimension of who we are and what we most cherish. The notion of retirement becomes redundant, for "soul work" in some form or another is what we can do until we are very old (Batten 2000: 24).

Betty was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2000 shortly after her 76th birthday in June 2000. She continued to carry out her life's "soul work" until she was too frail to do so. Betty Wark died peacefully at 12.40 am, Thursday, 16 May 2001 in her 78th year surrounded by her *whanau*. After her death Betty lay in state at Ngā Whare Waatea Marae at Mangere where a Requiem Mass was held for her on Friday 17 May. On Saturday 18 May, as she had requested, her body was taken back to Motuti Marae in the Hokianga to await burial in her *papakainga* 'home base'. She wanted to return to the Hokianga, where her *whakapapa* connected her. She wanted to make the journey Home.

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I would like to acknowledge the late Betty Wark for sharing her inspiring and courageous story. I would also like to thank Phyllis Herda for her helpful comments and critical engagement with this article.

NOTES

1. At the time I was contemplating putting together a proposal for a PhD (Connor 2006) on Māori women's biography, Betty Wark advertised for someone to write her life story. Betty's community work in Central Auckland and what actually motivated her to do this work provided ample material to consider her as a potential subject for a biographical research project. I made contact with Betty and discussed the idea of developing a research proposal that incorporated both an academic and creative component which would be able to accommodate her biography together with the research and academic requirements of a doctoral thesis. Betty was very open to this approach and once the proposal was approved work on the biography began. Throughout the writing of her biography, each chapter was returned to Betty for comment, and authorisation. The interviews took place during 1996 and all quotations attributed to Betty are from these interviews. Betty's portrait is based on these interviews and my doctoral thesis (Connor 2006).
2. See Nathan Matthews (2007) whose research on Hato Paora College in Feilding explores how leadership and strong male role models were present for Māori boys who have attended Catholic boarding schools.
3. Freemans Bay and Ponsonby are contiguous suburbs in inner city Auckland. Epsom is also a suburb of inner city Auckland and is located on the eastern side of the city.

ABSTRACT

Whāea or "Ma" Betty Wark was a Māori woman who was actively involved with community-based organisations from the 1950s until her death in May 2001. She was particularly well-known as being one of the founders of Arohanui Incorporated which was established in 1976. Its main purpose was to provide accommodation for young homeless Māori and others in need.

Keywords: Betty Wark, Māori women's biography, Arohanui Incorporated, Catholicism

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Abbreviations:
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DUSCA = District of the United States Consul, Apia.
PMM = Papers of Margaret Mead and the South Pacific Ethnographic Archives, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

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