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PRECIS

CHURCH AND STATE IN TONGA: THE INFLUENCE OF THE WESLEYAN
METHODIST MISSIONARIES ON THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF TONGA,
1826-1875

Sione Lātūkefu

THIS thesis aims to assess critically and objectively the significance of the part played by the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries in the political development of Tonga from the re-establishment of their mission in 1826 to the promulgation of the Tongan Constitution in 1875.

In order to gain an understanding of the impact of the missionaries on the political life in Tonga, it became necessary to begin with a close scrutiny of the traditional political system of Tonga, as far as this can still be reconstructed, and to consider the ways in which politics were closely interwoven in the total fabric of traditional Tongan society. It was particularly important to consider the connection that existed between the traditional religious and political structure, since, later, the work of the missionaries in undermining the traditional religion helped to bring about the collapse of much of the framework of the traditional society.

Prior to the coming of the missionaries, there had already been a period of political turbulence and a struggle for power,

... attempts by the Hau dynasty or temporal rulers
(Tu'i Kanokupolu) to establish absolute authority over the whole of
Tonga. However, these efforts had failed, and when the missionaries
first arrived, Tonga was politically divided, and power was in the
hands of local chiefs.

The missionaries brought with them the ideals and values
of their parent society and sought to transplant these in Tonga.
Seeing a resemblance to a monarchy in the Hau or Tu'i Kanokupolu
dynasty they threw their support behind it, and became the close
advisers of Tāufa'āhau - King George - who had accepted Christianity
in 1829. With the help and support of the missionaries and their
Christian followers, he succeeded in the next two decades in uniting
the whole of Tonga under a monarchical system and established the
rule of law.

The founding of the Kingdom and the establishment of the
rule of law were the most significant innovations in the political
history of Tonga. Attempts have been made to examine critically the
role played by the missionaries in these events. Of particular
importance was the extent to which the missionaries could be held
directly responsible for the creation of a monarchy, the unification
of Tonga and the drawing up and promulgation of the Codes of Laws
and later Constitution; a considerable section of the thesis has
been devoted to a discussion of these issues.

The influence of the Wesleyans in Tongan affairs did not go

unchallenged, for there was strong opposition not only from the
Tongans, but also from non-missionary Europeans and from the Roman
Catholic mission which had been established by 1842. In the final
sections of this work, consideration has been given to the question
of whether these sources of opposition constituted a real challenge
to the influence of the Wesleyans and to what extent they brought
about modifications or changes in the political development of Tonga
at this time.

In addition to extensive research carried out in various
libraries and archives - public and private - oral traditions were
also recorded and used in the writing of this thesis.

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by

Sione Latūkefu

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TO my Mother, Mele Vaimoana Lātūkefu,
and my Father, Siosua 'Alopī Lātūkefu

Mo e 'ofa mo'oni

This thesis is my own work for which I accept
full responsibility

Sanku

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PREFACE

NEAR the centre of the 70,000,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean¹ lies the smallest Kingdom in the world, known as Tonga. Situated 1,100 miles north-east of New Zealand and 420 miles south-east of Fiji, it consists of more than 150 small islands which are scattered between 15° and 23° South Latitude and 173° and 177° West Longitude. The Kingdom is divided into three main island groups, Tongatapu to the south, Ha'apai in the centre, and Vava'u to the north. The total area of the whole group is 269 square miles, though only 36 of the islands are inhabited by the population which numbers about 76,000² at present, 97.5 per cent of whom are indigenous³ and belong to the Polynesian race.

Politically, Tonga is a constitutional monarchy under the protection of Great Britain. While the treaty which

-
- 1 W.H. Fitchett, 'The Greatest Sea on the Planet', A Century in the Pacific, edited by J. Colwell (Sydney, 1914), 3.
 - 2 According to His Majesty King Tāufa'āhau (P.I.M., August 1966, 9). The population of Tonga was estimated to be 76,000 in 1966 and there were 340 persons per square mile.
 - 3 Pacific Islands Year Book and Who's Who (Sydney, 1963), Ninth Edition, 119.

provided British protection was not entered into until the beginning of this century,⁴ Tonga became a constitutional monarchy in 1875.⁵ Varying opinions have been expressed concerning the part played in the development of this monarchical system by the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries, since their influence dominated the affairs of Tonga during the first fifty years of their work in the group.

Regarding the constitutional development in Tonga as a disastrous error, Basil Thomson, an able but biased observer,⁶ laid the blame at the Methodist missionaries' door.⁷ Louis B. Wright and Mary Isabel Fry, taking their cue from Thomson, wrote:

From the first, they [the Methodist missionaries] itched to change the patriarchal feudal system to some form that comported with the democratic ideas that most of them had acquired in Australia, where the belief in universal suffrage had already taken root. The preachers longed to see pious Tongans voting blue laws to bring about the Methodist millennium that they envisaged. King

4 The Treaty of Friendship and Protection between Great Britain and Tonga was signed in December 1900. It was revised in 1958 and ratified in 1959.

5 See p. 370 below.

6 See N. Rutherford, Shirley Baker and the Kingdom of Tonga, A.N.U., 1966, iii-iv.

7 B. Thomson, The Diversions of a Prime Minister (Edinburgh, 1894), 222-3.

George, devout Methodist that he was, had other views, however, and it was not until 1862, at the height of theocratic power, that the preachers persuaded him against his better judgment to give the people a magical instrument of government called a Constitution,....⁸

For reasons diametrically opposed to those held by Thomson and his disciples, friends and supporters of missionary work claimed the same constitutional development as evidence of a remarkably successful missionary enterprise, and gave full credit to the missionaries for this outstanding achievement.⁹ They believed that 'civilization' and 'law and order' were the spontaneous results of evangelization and would not have developed without the ground being prepared by the missionaries. The missionaries themselves subscribed to this view as the following remarks show:

A more hallowed and noble triumph, of Gospel truth, Tonga had never witnessed, than when the social and political advancement of its population was thus acknowledged, by king, chiefs, and commoners, to be the sole result of that enlightenment and saving grace, which the religion of Jesus Christ had imparted, and before which heathenism and tyranny had fallen to rise no more.¹⁰

8 L.B. Wright and M.I. Fry, Puritans in the South Seas, (New York, 1936), 259-60.

9 See p. 287 below. Some of the missionary records were written for propaganda purposes, and were therefore as biased as those of their opponents.

10 T. West, Ten Years in South-Central Polynesia... (London, 1865), 438.

Although these commentators were clearly convinced that all political changes in Tonga were to be directly attributed to the influence or interference of the Wesleyan missionaries, there is a need to re-examine this question from a less partisan viewpoint. It is the purpose of this thesis to try to assess critically and objectively the significance of the part played by the Methodist missionaries in the political development of Tonga from the re-establishment of their mission in 1826 to the promulgation of the Tongan Constitution in 1875. It makes an attempt to demythologize the firmly established notions, consciously or unconsciously developed and perpetuated either for purposes of religious propaganda by the supporters of the mission or for denigrating purposes by its opponents. It tries to assess the over-all impact which the missionaries had upon the Tongan way of life at this time and to determine whether in fact, they were solely responsible for the political changes in Tonga, as some writers have claimed.

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who, in one way or another, kindly assisted me both in my research and the preparation of this work. I feel indebted to so many, that it is impossible to acknowledge everyone by name, but I would ask those whose names do not appear on these pages to accept my very sincere thanks for their help.

My thanks go to the staff of the following libraries and archives for their valuable assistance which helped to make my research easier and more enjoyable: the National Library of Australia, Canberra; the Mitchell Library, Sydney; the Turnbull Library and the Dominion Archives in Wellington, N.Z.; to Ian Diamond, archivist of the Fiji Archives, and many others in various institutions in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji.

I must acknowledge my indebtedness to the General Secretary of the Methodist Overseas Mission, the Rev. C.F. Gribble, O.B.E., and the Rev. E.V. Newman, who permitted the use of the Methodist Overseas Mission Archives; to Dr D. Williams of Trinity College, Auckland, for the use of the College archives; to the Rev. J.B.H. Robson, for the use of Methodist archives in Suva; to the Rev. G. Harris, President of the Wesleyan Church in Tonga and to Bishop J.H.M. Rodgers, of the Roman Catholic Church, for the use of their respective archives at Nuku'alofa, and also to Father C.P. Butler and Father Mingam of the Marist Fathers' headquarters at Hunter's Hill, Sydney, for the use of the monastery's archives, their useful criticisms of the chapter on the Roman Catholic mission, and the translation of letters from the French.

My attention was initially drawn to the subject of this thesis by the late Rev. R.G. Page, who had been a missionary

in Tonga for 38 years. To this remarkable and unassuming man I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude for his sound advice, encouragement and personal interest in my work. The valuable historical books and records which he had wisely and carefully collected for many years, and which have been generously given to me by his son Roger and daughter-in-law Mary, have been of invaluable help to this work. It is my deep regret that he did not live to see the completion of this thesis, which he had always wished.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation of the valuable assistance given to me by Dr A.H. Wood and Dr E.E.V. Collocott, both ex-missionaries and authorities on the history of Tonga. Thanks are also due to Miss Gwenyth L. Davies of Adelaide, Mrs Halliday of West Wyalong, Miss Oldmeadow of Melbourne, Miss Crosby of Sydney, the Rev. H.K. Moulton of London and other descendants of the Wesleyan missionaries, who gave me access to the journals and letters of their forebears who had served in Tonga during the period of this study; these documents proved to be invaluable sources of information.

This study has been enriched by the oral traditions collected from various informants in Tonga during my field trip there from November 1964 to February 1965. I am deeply indebted to the Hon. Ve'ehala, Keeper of the Palace records and Secretary of the Traditional Committee, for the wealth of

information he kindly gave me in answer to my enquiries, and also to his assistants, Tupou Posesi Fonua and Vāhoi Naufahu, who willingly helped me to find information in their records. Thanks are also due to the following informants: Tu'i'āfitu of Makave, Vava'u; Fe'iloakitau Kaho and the late Sione Filipe Tongilava of Kolofo'ou; the late Molitoni Fīnau of Nukunuku, 'Uhatafe of Mu'a, Siola'ā Soakai of Hihifo, Ha'apai, and many others who generously gave of their time.

To my supervisor, Dr W.N. Gunson of the Department of Pacific History, Australian National University, I owe an immeasurable debt, and it is impossible to convey fully the extent of his patient guidance and encouragement throughout the preparation of this thesis. I also wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor J.W. Davidson for the generous support given to me by his Department and for his invaluable criticisms of certain aspects of the thesis; and Mr Harry Maude, Dr Francis West, Dr Dorothy Shineberg and Dr Deryck Scarr, who have at all times shown their readiness to discuss and criticize this work; to Dr Alaric Maude and Dr Noel Rutherford, both students of Tongan geography and history, who have read portions of this manuscript, and offered valuable suggestions.

I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to Mrs Anvida Lamberts, who carried out more than the usual task

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Sione Lātūkefu,
Canberra, January 1967

ABBREVIATIONS

<u>A.A.</u>	<u>American Anthropologist</u>
A.N.U.	Australian National University, Canberra
A.T.L.	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington
A.W.M.S.	Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society
D.A.N.	Dominion Archives of New Zealand, Wellington
<u>J.P.H.</u>	<u>The Journal of Pacific History</u>
<u>J.P.S.</u>	<u>Journal of the Polynesian Society</u>
<u>J.R.A.I.</u>	<u>Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute</u>
<u>J.R.G.S.</u>	<u>Journal of the Royal Geographical Society</u>
<u>K.A.S.P.</u>	<u>Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers</u>
L.M.S.	London Missionary Society
L.R.	Letters Received
MF.	Microfilm
M.L.	Mitchell Library, Sydney
M.O.M.	Methodist Overseas Mission
MS ., MSS.	Manuscript(s)
N.L.A.	National Library of Australia, Canberra
<u>S.M.H.</u>	<u>Sydney Morning Herald</u>
T.C.L.	Trinity College Library, Auckland
T.M.L.	Tonga Missionary Letters
TS.	Typescript
T.S.L.	Tonga Sundry Letters
W.M.H.	Wesleyan Mission House, London
W.M.L.	Wesleyan Missionary Letters, A.T.L.
W.M.M.	War Memorial Museum, Auckland.
<u>W-M Mag.</u>	<u>Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine</u>
W.M.S.P.	Wesleyan Missionary Society Papers, A.T.L.