

**THE DECISION TO *LOTU*:
NEW PERSPECTIVES FROM WHALING RECORDS ON
THE SOURCES AND SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN SAMOA**

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Whaling logbooks would seem an unlikely place to look for information about the spread of Christianity. However, a survey of Samoa's forgotten whaling history has revealed in passing that later missionary histories were in error on several points: Many later accounts overlooked that Christianity arrived at Samoa simultaneously from several separate sources, and they often greatly overemphasized the speed, scale, and completeness of the Samoans' adoption of Christianity. By adding to other contemporary accounts a new perspective obtained from whaling sources, it has become apparent that the Samoans had not been isolated from developments elsewhere in the South Pacific and that their "decision to *lotu*"--to pray to the new God--had a high indigenous content. Indeed, it now seems over a third of the Samoans had already decided to pray to the Christian God, rather than to the old ones, before the arrival of John Williams and the first foreign missionaries in 1830.

Moreover, although the conversions at the Samoas were extraordinarily rapid, they were far from universal. The whaling records show that while Apia was "Christian," pacified and safe for foreigners by about 1835, whalers visiting outer areas like Falealupo on Savai'i, Fangaloa on Upolu, and the Manu'a group still encountered un-Christian, unpacific, and decidedly unsafe incidents and bicultural conflicts as late as 1850.

Many histories have already been written, from missionary perspectives, about Pacific missions. With well-documented sources, these histories have tended to be comparatively easy options and have been tack-

led first. There is a need now, however, to adopt new processes and perspectives, including a determined effort to search out and use less-familiar sources, and to think out new ways to advance beyond one-sided foreign viewpoints. At this stage, a quantum change is called for to focus not solely on looking *in* "at the beach," but to also look *out* "from the beach." Developing new sources and new processes will be worth the additional labor if they reveal new insights and new, local ways of looking at old material.

Whaling logbooks and journals seem at first sight only distantly related to this task. They are seldom well written, and many have a preoccupation with navigation and weather that makes them indigestible reading. Nevertheless, these whaling journals and logbooks are some of the few contemporary sources with a viewpoint different from that of the missionaries and, when taken together, they sometimes provide new insights into the culture-contact period.

Missionary Perspectives

John Williams, the first missionary to visit Samoa, was surprisingly perceptive and realistic, but it is sometimes overlooked that he spent only five days at Samoa in July 1830 and three weeks in October and November 1832. Williams recognized that the mass conversions when the locals decided to *lotu*, while demonstrable and wholehearted, were not very deep, intellectually or culturally. In his book *Narrative of Missionary Enterprise in the South Seas*, Williams acknowledged, "Some thought that by their embracing Christianity, vessels would be induced to visit them. . . . Others thought that they would be preserved from the [inherent] malignity of their Gods, many hoped by adopting the new religion, to prolong their lives and a few valued it chiefly as a means to terminating their sanguinary and desolating wars." Williams also quoted at length a "venerable chief" who listed enviously the clothes, axes, knives, and other material wealth of the foreigners and concluded, "the God who has given his white worshippers these valuable things must be wiser than our gods, for they have not given the like to us" (Williams 1838:570).

A strong case was made in 1978 by J. Pereira, a perceptive local scholar, that the Samoans saw Williams as the priestly facilitator of a new contractual (*feagaiga*) relationship with the new God, with whom a new contract or covenant (*fa'a-feagaiga*) was symbolized and bonded by a traditional exchange of gifts (Pereira 1978:16). The Samoans knew the foreigners understood the significance of reciprocal gift exchanges

because that was the way they had bartered in the whaling trade for a decade before Williams's arrival. High chief Malietoa's declaration that his people and the missionaries were henceforth "*aiga tasi*," one big family, certainly involved expectations of a sustained reciprocity of future familylike relations and obligations.

Curiously, it has long been recognized that the missionaries, and their merchant backers, saw "Christianity as the means of Civilisation" and civilization as synonymous with "commercial development" (Coates, Beecham, and Ellis 1837; see also Gunson 1978:171-174, 269-272; Howe 1984: 111-114). But ironically, the importance to the Samoans of the materialistic, contractual, and trade aspects in their decision to *lotu* seems to have been almost overlooked. Evidently the Samoans' experience of a decade of trade with the foreign *papalagi* weighed heavily in their expectations when deliberately, after much public debate, and with scarcely any missionary prompting, they decided to *lotu* (Williams 1838:570).

After Williams, later missionary writers about Samoa were less than discerning. In support of the missions, and mission funding, they created new myths about what they saw as an astonishingly rapid, effective, and gratifying adoption of Christianity in Samoa. The historiography need not be reviewed here (see Thomas 1990; Meleisia 1987). Suffice to say that the miracle of religious conversion, which certainly did take place, was not as abrupt, unprecedented, and comprehensive as much missionary and later literature implied. Certainly it was quite wrong to suggest the Samoans were scarcely visited islands: So many whaling and trading vessels had visited by 1832 that many Samoans were already preparing to throw off their old gods and enter into a new, more material, and more lucrative contract with the new god and the new goods.

Early Foreign Visitors to Samoa

A very short survey of foreign visitors should begin with the foreign explorers. Neither Roggewien in 1722 nor Bougainville in 1768 recommended Samoa as a priority destination. The next explorer, La Perouse, lost twelve men in 1787, killed on Tutuila, and gave the Samoans a fearsome reputation and a very bad press (Linnekin 1991). The missionary George Turner conveyed a view that prevailed in Europe when he wrote that this massacre "branded the whole group for fifty years as a race of treacherous savages, whose shore ought not to be approached" (1861:4).

Samoa was not on the main trade routes that were opened up from 1788 onward by European and American fur traders and other merchant voyagers who took the "easternmost" route to China "south round Australia" (Richards 1986). There were, however, many foreign contacts with the Samoas well before the missionaries arrived in 1830. The first known foreign beachcomber, an Englishman, was reported at Manu'a in about 1806 by George Bass. It was said he had arrived there a few years earlier from Tonga (*Nautical Magazine* 1814).

The first influx of foreigners to the Samoas probably came soon after, with American traders who took sandalwood, "the firewood of the Gods," from Fiji to China from 1806 to 1812, from Hawaii from 1811, the Marquesas from 1814 to 1817, and Vanuatu from the 1820s (Ward 1968: 180). Although no records have been found yet of such trading visits to Samoa, it is most unlikely that these dynamic traders, who scoured the Pacific so thoroughly, did not examine the Samoas minutely too during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. A journal survives from Captain Benjamin Vanderford of Salem who called at Manu'a in 1822 with Fijian sandalwood and at Tutuila and Manu'a in 1827 with a cargo of Fijian bêche-de-mer bound for Manila and China (Vanderford 1821-1823; Driver 1826-1829). Two similarly informative journals survive for the trader *Emerald*, also of Salem, which called at "Powloo" (Upolu) as late as June 1835 seeking turtle shell, which by then was scarce and very highly priced at one musket for every good shell (Richards 1992:44-50).

The first whalers, halfway round the world from home, were always in need of clean water, fresh fruit, and vegetables, so many traded at the islands. An account of such a trading visit to obtain provisions at Samoa early in 1823 survives in an unsigned manuscript in the Mitchell Library in Sydney (Elyard n.d.; see also Gilson 1970:67). In this report the unnamed writer recorded that when the crew members of this unnamed whaleship called at Manu'a on 2 February 1823, they lost "a fine whaleboat, harpoons and lances" in the surf, and when on shore, the locals tried to kidnap them. "Having three Otaheitans on board, I hoped by their means to be able to converse with the people but in this was disappointed as they did not seem to understand much better than ourselves. I have no doubt that their language is nearly the same as [that they had recently encountered] at the Friendly Islands." The visitors traded at all the main Samoan islands, receiving pigs, yams, fruit, cloth, nets, and birds in exchange for hoop iron, knives, empty bottles, and cotton cloth. At Upolu, the crew counted 240 canoes visiting their ship, and the writer noted that

the curiosity of these people was excessive, which together with their not speaking a word of English, inclines me to believe they have been seldom visited, though no doubt small vessels from New South Wales have been trading here for sennit, as all the canoes that came for the purpose of trade, brought more or less of that article. I entirely failed in my principal object of obtaining at these islands a supply of yams, not being able to procure more than a dozen or two. . . . Though had I continued to cruise in that neighbourhood, I could have made these islands a place of resort for refreshments and have gone on shore safely when I pleased. (Elyard n.d. :5)

By 1823 many whaleships had visited Tonga and Tahiti. Despite extensive searching, the whaleship mentioned in the Elyard manuscript as at Samoa early in 1823 has not been further identified. However, among several possibilities, this vessel could have been the *John Bull* of London, which called at Sydney in mid-April 1823, last from the Society and Friendly Islands (Cumpston 1964: 141).

The first American whaler identified at Samoa, and at Tokelau as well, was Captain Richard Macy in the *Maro* of Nantucket in early 1824 (Richards 1992:20). On her previous voyage, the *Maro* had pioneered the new whaling grounds south of Japan, which prompted a major whaling bonanza with the dispatch of more than thirty American and six British whaleships there in 1822 alone. It soon became common for whaling captains to alternate cruises “on Japan” with cruises “on the Line” (i.e., the equator), from which grounds the Samoas would have proved a relatively handy source of cheap provisions. In 1825 Captain Macy reported that refreshments and an abundance of hogs could be obtained from the natives at Samoa who had “a passionate fondness for large blue beads” (Reynolds 1836:217).

A journal kept on board the London whaleship *Phoenix* recorded another visit to Samoa for provisions in August 1824. Moreover, while editing this journal for publication, Gunson noted that contrary to suggestions that the Samoas had scarcely been visited, Kotzebue’s account of trading at several locations in 1824 confirms that the Samoans were already well accustomed to foreign trading by then. At Manono, Kotzebue met a chief, probably a Tongan, who spoke a few words of English and carried a silk parasol and a silver dollar he had obtained from a foreign captain at Tonga (Kotzebue [1830] 1967:278-280; see also Gunson 1990b:7-12; Gunson 1990a: 180). Notably, not all the visits by whalers were short or isolated: A journal kept on the *Independence* of Nan-

tucket recorded that during a single voyage, between cruises on the Japan grounds, this ship visited Samoa in 1826, 1827, and 1828, and met three other whaleships there (Richards 1992:21-24).

The first visits to Samoa by John Williams, the first foreign missionary, did not take place until 1830 and 1832. A close examination of his journal reveals mention of a surprising number of foreigners there before him: several convicts from New South Wales in 1828; more convicts from Moreton Bay in 1832; John Stevens and other deserters from the London whaleship *Oldham* in 1832; John Wright and eleven other Englishmen living on Manono; a young English lad living at Manu'a; a "William Gray" who had been living on Tutuila since 1829, plus others there (Moyle 1984:69, 101, 104-105, 108-110, 114, 139-140, 157, 180, 185-186, 217-218, 232, 240; Richards 1992:25-37). Supporting evidence can be found separately for most of these men in whaling and other records, and for the suggestion that by 1832 many beachcombers from Wallis Island, Tonga, and elsewhere were converging on Samoa, which had rapidly developed a most favorable reputation among run-aways and deserters.

Judging all these indications together, it seems probable at least twenty or thirty foreigners were resident at the Samoas before Williams's first visit. Since the fragmentary records that remain identify twenty-five vessels at Samoa before 1832 and many more whaleships cruising on the equator and at Tonga (that is, both south and north of Samoa), it seems likely several dozen more had traded there before the first foreign missionaries arrived.

First Christian Beliefs from Tahiti and Tonga

In fact, Christianity was already moving towards Samoa from several sources well ahead of Williams. Later missionary accounts celebrating a spontaneous adoption of Christianity at Samoa exhibited a blinkered perception, not shared by contemporary Samoans, when they ignored that by 1830 Tahiti, Fiji, Tonga, New Zealand, and Hawaii had all experienced Christian visitors for some decades and that foreign trade was well developed with those islands. Captain Samuel Henry, son of the pioneer London Missionary Society (LMS) missionary at Tahiti, had begun interisland trading from Tahiti to New Zealand and elsewhere in 1820. He seems to have visited Samoa several times, and he later took as crewmen a prominent Samoan chief, Teoneula, and Sio Vili, who was also known as Joe Gimlet. These two Samoans went south to Tonga where the Wesleyan mission was well established, then spent time at

Tahiti in about 1827 not only learning Tahitian but also witnessing both the LMS "*lotu taiti*" (Tahitian Christianity) and the local Mamaia religious movement developing there. Sio Vili also visited Sydney, probably with Captain Henry in the *Snapper* during 1828, and he apparently spent some time on a sperm whaler before returning home to Samoa in 1829 (Freeman 1959: 187).

Early in 1830, several months before Williams's first visit, Sio Vili became a visionary and a prophet. He successfully launched a new indigenous religion that was a selective synthesis of Christian beliefs and traditional Samoan customs and practices, combined with cargo-cult expectations of material wealth arriving from overseas. This "*lotu Sio Vili*" gained strong support throughout Upolu, on Savai'i, and even on Tutuila. At its height, by one-estimate, the group included between five and six thousand members, or about one-fifth of the population, including high chief Mata'afa. As Freeman noted, it continued in strong opposition to the LMS Christians for a generation (1959: 198).

By 1830 Samoans who knew of other islands must have been expecting the new foreign religion to arrive soon. A further strong influence came from Tonga--the "*lotu toga*" (Tongan Christianity) from the Wesleyan mission began there in 1822. Political contacts between Samoa and Tonga were then strong, with dynastic intermarriage, several Tongan high chiefs living in Samoa, and quite frequent interisland voyaging. Williams, for example, reported seven Tongan canoes trading for fine mats just before his first visit (Moyle 1984:82). Before 1830, moreover, a number of leading Samoans had begun to identify themselves with *lotu toga*, some journeying to Tonga to learn more of the new religion. Mosese Nusitonga is said to have returned home to Samoa in 1829 to spread the *lotu toga*; and that year another Samoan, Saiva'a-ai, visited Tonga and on his return home persuaded two villages in Savai'i to *lotu* (Pereira 1978:32; Gunson 1990a:182).

John Williams acknowledged freely that the great welcome accorded his arrival at Sapapali'i in July 1830 was greatly facilitated by Fauea, a Samoan chief who returned home on board the *va'a lotu* (literally, prayer ship) with Williams after living ten years in Fiji and Tonga. Similarly helpful soon after was the return from Tonga of Salata, a daughter of Matetau of Manono and a wife of the "king" of Ha'apai. She traveled home in a canoe with 150 Tongan Christians and the Samoan orator Mafua, whose followers taught Samoans to read soon after Williams's first short visit (Moyle 1984: 177). The strength of this *lotu toga* group is evident from Turner's estimate that in 1836 it numbered at least two thousand followers in sixty-eight villages (Pereira 1978:32; Gunson

1990a: 184). Predictably, there was soon intense competition between the followers of *lotu toga* and *lotu taiti*, largely along old political lines and later fueled by LMS rivalries with the Wesleyans.

At Leone on Tutuila in October 1832, Williams visited several villages where, on advice from Savai'i, the people had already built chapels and begun keeping the Sabbath. There he was told of a devout pastor, Salima, who had been diligently involved in good works in several villages and already had a following of nearly three hundred. Salima could read a Tahitian Bible and had translated part of the Anglican prayerbook into Samoan and taught his converts to repeat it (Murray 1876:33-34; Moyle 1984:104). Earlier Salima, or another self-appointed local pastor there, had "written to all the white men on the Islands [asking them] to set the people a better example and teach them religion" (Moyle 1984: 111). Salima was also called Norval, as were several whaleships.

Christian Beliefs from Foreigners Present before 1830

But even more striking was that by 1830 several Samoan communities eager to *lotu* had kidnaped or adopted stray European beachcombers and whaleship deserters, begging them to pass on what scraps they knew of the new religion. Several sects led by sailors had developed by 1830, with "a great many white people about the islands turning the people [to] religion." Turner described two such "sailor sects," one run by an Englishman and another by a Portuguese, both clearly former whalers, which included periodic feasting that were welcome to Samoans and distantly related to holy communion (Turner 1861:10-12). Most of these "*lotu* sailor" groups were small, localized, and easily incorporated into the later mission. At least two had several hundred Samoan converts, who no doubt considered they had already taken their decision to *lotu* or were waiting only for the arrival of a properly ordained missionary as a qualified facilitator with a correct, direct line to the new God.

Williams judged these proponents of "*lotu* sailor" as "great obstacles to missionary work" and wrote scathingly that the Samoans "were so anxious for someone to conduct their [new] religious services, they made collections of food, mats etc to runaway sailors, some of whom read portions of English Scriptures or prayer book; but others were vile enough to sing infamous songs in English" and to assure their enthusiastic but gullible hosts that "this was worship acceptable to God" (Williams 1838:572).

Though several more accounts exist of runaway seamen teaching

about the new religion, none match the vividness of Williams's own notes in his journal, which he did not publish in full, about his rebuking two Cockney former whalers at Aleipata in 1832 for saying prayers, ministering to the sick, holding Sunday gatherings, and "baptising" two or three hundred converts, which they called "turning the people [to] religion." About this incident Williams wrote, "I said to Jerry, suppose you were to go to England just naked as you are now, with your navel tattooed and the lower parts of your tattooed belly shewing as it is now, with nothing in the world but a hat and an old pair of trousers on, and go in to a large Church or Chapel and stand up there to baptise people. What would the people think of that?" Cockney Jerry, thoroughly intimidated by his lack of such essential trappings of religion as the right clothes, replied humbly, "I see I am wrong, sir, and I'll not baptise any more" (Moyle 1984:114).

Clearly, despite the contrary impression conveyed by later missionaries, Samoa was by no means unaccustomed to foreign visitors or unaware of Christianity by 1830. Indeed, through contacts with whalers and traders and with Christians in neighboring islands, Samoa seems to have been well on the way to adopting several forms of Christianity even if Williams and the other ordained foreign missionaries had not arrived when they did. The decision to *lotu* by so many Samoans almost immediately after John Williams arrived certainly looked miraculous to missionaries used to very slow progress elsewhere, but at least a third, and perhaps 40 percent, of Samoa's population had become followers of some variant form of *lotu* before they joined Williams's orthodox LMS! Consequently, the decision to *lotu* may well have been judged by the Samoan participants themselves as an indigenous, "home-based" decision that, by then, was inevitable with or without Williams! No doubt, how one saw the miracle of rapid conversion depended on one's perspective--whether seen from *on* the beach or from *off* the shore.

That so much more detail is known about the impact of Williams than of Sio Vili and the other premissionary "native teachers," or of the effects of beachcombers like tattooed Cockney Jerry, is because Williams was the only one to write down his experiences and because his successors chose to emphasize selectively his important part in the "miraculous" conversion of Samoan heathens to Christians virtually overnight. The decision to question seriously the later missionaries' interpretations has been prompted not solely by the contents of the whaling journals and logbooks but from also looking at familiar information in a new light, with a new perspective prompted by the whaling sources.

The Uneven Spread of Christianity

The whaling logbooks and journals also show that the years immediately following the various decisions to *lotu* were far from calm and Christian. Visiting whalers who ignored local taboos were still killed; many others were still enticed ashore, captured, and ransomed for muskets that were then used not only in renewed tribal wars but also for several attacks on whaleships.

In July 1834 at Falealupo on northwest Savai'i, when crew from the American whaler *William Penn* persisted in ignoring traditional local taboos, a fight developed; the crews of two whale boats were captured and one American and one Hawaiian killed. The survivors, except for two or three Hawaiians, were ransomed a few months later. One contemporary reflected the limited extent of trust and solid Christian values on both sides when he judged that this disaster was the captain's fault for not taking the standard precaution of holding some locals hostage on board whenever crewmen went ashore (*New Bedford Mercury*, 22 May 1835).

In January 1834 the logbook of the *Bowditch* of Bristol, Rhode Island, recorded ruefully the ransoming of three men held on shore at Manu'a: "It is the custom here for the native women to decoy the men away from the boats, and to their beds, and not to give them up again without muskets." A journal keeper on the *Benjamin Rush* of Warren, Rhode Island, at Tutuila in May 1835 wrote only, "Trading with the natives one musket two bayonets for 15 hogs. A Bad time. Getting ready to start after the spouting fish again." Another then at Apia noted "clubs and spears are fast giving way to muskets and powder" (quoted in Richards 1992:41, 43). At Tutuila in July 1835, an English beachcomber privy to some local, very un-Christian habits warned the crew of the London whaler *Vigilant* just in time to save their vessel from being captured (*Vigilant* 1831-1835). The journal kept on the *Nassau* of New Bedford in August 1835 recorded a common event, the ransoming of a deserter for a musket (but is more of note for unusual entries for a distant love, like "Oh my Rachael, almost two months and no whales!" [Richards 1992:51]). Clearly the decision to *lotu* had not reduced the traditional habits of war.

The whaling records show clearly that long after the initial decision to *lotu*, the safety of foreigners varied from place to place. As late as 1836, in "a beautiful bay on Upolu," only a last-minute, providential gust of wind saved the American whaler *Charles Carroll* from being cut off and destroyed by a well-planned and vigorously executed attack mounted from a fleet of canoes (Calkin 1953:60).

From early on, Apia harbor became the safest port. In 1831 an English captain had had to take an armed guard ashore at Apia as “protection” against the “treacherous” Samoans (Lafond de Lurcy 1845: 138). But by 1835 even normally cautious captains were allowing their crews to spend brief periods on liberty on shore. This increasing confidence and security around Apia followed in part from the presence of local Christians there from 1832 and foreign missionaries from June 1836. By the 1840s, when five or more whaleships might lie in Apia harbor at any one time, as many as 150 whalers might be rostered for shore leave. Whaling generally alternated short sprints of very hard work with long spells of intense boredom. Tight discipline was essential on board to forestall discontent and mutiny, so despite the risks most captains found it better to allow their jaded crews short stints of liberty ashore in safe ports.

One of the major attractions of Apia harbor was the presence of resident foreigners--former whalers at first but later missionaries and traders as well--who could usually advise visitors who among the Samoans held the power on shore and who could or could not honor promises to provide provisions. The trade was erratic and unpredictable, and regulating it proved beneficial to all parties. The first port treaty was concluded at Apia in 1838 by Captain Drinkwater Bethune in HMS *Conway*. Soon after, the United States Exploring Expedition under Commodore Charles Wilkes called at Samoa largely, it seems, to further protect American commercial interests and “to support the American whalefleet.” This commercial rather than scientific role was soon apparent when Wilkes proposed sixteen “Commercial Regulations.” After full consideration by “the principal chiefs of the Samoan Group of Islands,” these regulations were jointly signed into effect on 5 November 1839 by the local chiefs, Commodore Wilkes, and the newly appointed consuls for both the United States and Britain (Wilkes 1845, 2:93-94, 102-106, 428-430; see also Richards 1992:71, 104-106, 157).

Thereafter, strong discipline was exerted at Apia by the chiefly *matai*, the missionaries, and the consuls. Even so, serious incidents persisted, particularly in other districts. In October 1839 Commodore Wilkes sentenced to exile overseas a Samoan who had murdered a New Bedford whaler, a severe punishment the Samoans thought much worse than death! Later, Commodore Wilkes volunteered to implement the sanctions envisaged in the commercial treaty, and on the prompting of Malietoa and the chiefs at Apia, the Americans exacted savage retribution on common enemies. First the Americans attacked Satupa'itea village on Savai'i, trying to capture the chief Opotuno, who was accused of several murders and of “threatening” American whalers. Although

all of Opotuno's personal property was burned, three attacks fell short of their goal as the chief simply took to hiding in the mountains when warships visited (Wilkes 1845, 2:88-93, 101-102).

In July 1840 Tagi, a minor chief of Saluafata, on Upolu, murdered Gideon Smith, an American whaler living ashore. Sworn evidence indicated Smith had failed to honor certain promises of gifts, including some to the relatives of Tagi, in compensation for treating a young woman very badly. Nevertheless, the consuls demanded the murderer be delivered to them for trial. In the circumstances, Tagi's kin naturally refused. When the American Exploring Expedition ships returned in February 1841, as delayed retaliation their crews shelled, attacked, and burned three villages--Saluafata, Fusi, and Salelesi--inflicting a disproportionate loss of life (Wilkes 1845, 3:382-383, 434-438; 5:25-26, 31-32).

The pacification, or perhaps intimidation, of the Samoans that had not been completed by the decision to *lotu* was thus enforced by the heavy-handed, one-sided warfare of these American "explorers, scientists and sailors" (Richards 1992:77-130). Thereafter, visits by men-o'-war were quite numerous and were sufficient to establish the consuls and support their assumed extraterritorial powers over and above local law whenever foreigners were involved (Gilson 1970: 198-221).

Given the obvious attractions of Samoa and the Samoans, and the squalor and boredom inevitable on a whaleship, desertions were common. At first whaling captains found recovering these runaways troublesome, but before long at Apia harbor the locals could be paid to hunt down deserters and return those they did not like. Most American crewmen were "greenhands," that is, unemployed farm boys out for a "good time," ready for illicit alcohol if any could be found, but on the whole they were looking for fairly innocent fun rather than hell bent upon booze, women, and brawling. There was some of that of course, but at Apia the chiefly *matai*, the foreign consuls, and the missionaries generally saw to it that by one means or another the excesses of the visiting whalers were kept within strict limits that minimized the whalers' social impact on the local community. Thus good law and order prevailed around Apia harbor for more than a decade until the discipline the *matai* could exert declined sharply during the troubled years of the 1850s.

Even so, whaling and other sources show lawlessness still prevailed in outer areas. William Diaper was kidnaped at Manu'a in 1840. Deserters outside Apia were often not returned and not ransomed. As late as 1855, the people of Fangaloa sought to entice a vessel to be wrecked on shore

there. And five years after that, the mission newspaper reported that several survivors of a distant shipwreck who had reached Savai'i by raft had been treated barbarously, and acknowledged specifically that even at that late date not all villages had abandoned heathenism (Richards 1992:72-76, 175, 186). If most Samoans held steadfastly to the earlier decision to *lotu*, the evidence from the whalers certainly cautions against assuming the conversion was universal.

Conclusion

To conclude, until whaling declined after 1850, it was the whalers, rather than traders, who brought most foreign goods, techniques, and customs to Samoa. In material terms, it was the whalers who fulfilled the missionaries' promises, and Samoans' expectations, that "civilization" would bring material benefits too. These trade relations worked well for more than a decade. Ironically, though, in attracting both British and American warships to follow them to protect their whalefleets and their national commercial interests, the whalers also did Samoans a disservice: that of exposing them to Great Power rivalries and to the chain of events that led to the division of Old Samoa into the two Samoas that persist today.

The whalers' early and substantial contribution to Samoa certainly deserves to be better known. A close study of the surviving contemporary whaling records has given new insights, including into what seemed at first only a very peripherally related subject, the Samoans' decision to *lotu*. If enough such new insights can be found, then perhaps the writing of balanced, dual-perspective mission histories can begin a new phase.

NOTE

Most of the research for this article was conducted while I lived in Western Samoa from 1986 to 1988, but a short period was spent in 1987 as Scholar in Residence at the Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, Massachusetts, and as a guest speaker at the Munson Institute at Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Connecticut. I am particularly grateful to these and to other whaling museums and libraries for their kind permission to quote from their materials in my recent book, *Samoa's Forgotten Whaling Heritage*. The text was completed and typeset in Apia in 1988, but printing was delayed by Cyclone Ofa and Cyclone Val and was not completed, in New Zealand, until November 1992. A short version of this article, the result of a reexamination of the sources used during that protracted gestation period, was presented at the IX Pacific History Conference in Christchurch in December 1992.

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