RICHARD GILSON—THE PERFECTIONIST HISTORIAN OF SAMOA*

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This is a story of the life, work, and legacy of Richard Gilson, whose massive political history of nineteenth-century Samoa bridged the disciplines of history and anthropology. Gilson, a perfectionist, but to a self-stultifying degree, was unable to bring his project to completion and was therefore passed over for a permanent position at the Australian National University. Unemployed and in difficult personal circumstances, Gilson continued working on his book, but the manuscript was not quite complete when he died of a heart attack, at the age of 37, just as he was getting his life back on track. *Samoa, 1830 to 1900* was completed and seen through the press by his widow and colleagues. A prophetic reviewer remarked that the book stands as "a fitting memorial to a man who so closely identified himself with his vocation and the people of whose history he made himself the chronicler."

RICHARD (DICK) GILSON (1925–1963) could have been almost whatever he liked. He was no sportsman, that is true, but he displayed prodigious intellectual abilities that spanned the physical and social sciences. He could have been a medical doctor, had opportunity's door opened to him. Instead, he embraced academic life, gaining his graduate qualifications in political science; and to make ends meet along the way, he taught inorganic chemistry. He then turned to history and, in the last two years of his short life, redefined himself as a social anthropologist. That such a talented individual could commit himself to a massive political history of nineteenth-century Samoa speaks volumes for those islands and its people. The eventual book, *Samoa, 1830 to 1900*, appeared posthumously, in 1970,[1] and was immediately

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recognized as exceptionally fine work of history. Despite *Samoa, 1830 to 1900* being essentially a product of the 1950s, it is not excessive to say that, all things considered, it remains a landmark in Pacific Islands historiography.[2] Far from being a tract of its time, it has largely withstood the winds of revisionism, and its chapters up to 1884 have not been bettered. Yet Gilson worked under the shadows of personal distress and a family history of heart disease. The manuscript was unfinished at the time of his death in 1963, aged 37, leaving friends and family the melancholy and difficult task of completing the book and seeing it through to publication.

Gilson researched and wrote much of the book during his five-year tenure, from 1952 until 1957, as Research Fellow in Pacific History at the Australian National University (ANU), under the leadership of J.W. (Jim) Davidson. Also a historian of Samoa, Davidson contributed a warm-hearted introduction and a graceful concluding chapter. The introduction imparts a definite sense that the fates were unkind to Gilson and leaves no doubt that his magnum opus had a difficult gestation. Davidson also brings out Gilson's decency as a man and ability as a scholar. At that time, Davidson could only allude to the emotional toll of Gilson's struggle to write and to hold his life together. If ever a book was forged in adversity it was this one. Dick Gilson's life and work invite reflection on the pioneering years of Pacific Islands historiography, and on the personal toll that a great work can exact on its maker and the maker upon himself.

Early Years and Education

Born in Eugene, Oregon, in 1925, Dick was the third and youngest child of Charles and Florence (nèe Quinn). He compensated for an adored older brother, Robert, who had died some years earlier; and Dick must have been aware that he was taking Robert's place. Tragedy struck again with the deaths in quick succession of his parents, leaving him to be brought up by his sister Alice and her husband, Paul Stathem. Such a history of family rupture could well have resulted in profound feelings of insecurity and resentment, but the only discernable carryover into Gilson's later life was a disinclination to be a financial burden on others.

When the time came for further education, Gilson neither expected support from his sister nor would he have accepted it, for the Stathems had three children of their own. Instead, he sought sponsorship and was enrolled at the University of Southern California (USC) in 1944 as a Naval Officer Trainee. It was, initially at least, a favorable arrangement for although nominally on active service for the duration of the War—and thus having veteran status thereafter—Gilson in reality was a full-time university student, but not

initially in political science and anthropology, the subjects with which he is associated. That was a later development. With a medical career in mind, he enrolled as a science student and received straight A's in all his undergraduate courses—except in the two that mattered from a Navy point of view, namely naval organization and physical education.[3] At the conclusion of hostilities, he went on what was called "inactive service" and switched to political science, with a smattering of history and anthropology. He did just as well in his new subjects, despite being active in student affairs and the President of the Independent Student Council in 1946,[4] and graduated A.B. (summa cum laude) in the unusual combination of physical sciences and political science in 1947.

Continuing in political science, again with a smattering of anthropology, Gilson was one of a number of outstanding graduate students who descended on USC immediately after the war.[5] He supported himself as a graduate tutor in inorganic chemistry and as graduate teaching assistant in American history and government. He further demonstrated his breadth of abilities by writing research papers on the governing of minorities in Soviet Asia and on colonial administration in Southeast Asia and brushed up on his French sufficiently to write a master's thesis on "The Development of the Gaullist Movement in France." During the summer semesters, he earned his living by fire spotting for the United States Forestry Service, that boon to impecunious graduate students. He loved the job despite—perhaps even because of—the isolation. Solitude encouraged reading, and his companions were books.

Fulbright Scholar

Why Gilson decided to switch his interests to New Zealand's Pacific Island dependencies is uncertain. Perhaps they arose from a graduate anthropology course he read on "Peoples of the South Pacific," or it is possible that a member or members of faculty encouraged him. Certainly it was a field that was beginning to attract some scholarly attention after the Pacific War and the setting up of the United Nations and the South Pacific Commission. However, there was more to it. The shift from the hard sciences to the social sciences was not because he lacked the opportunity to pursue a medical career. The naval authorities would have paid his tuition, but Gilson had other ideas. Quite simply, he did not want to fight in a war or to chalk up further obligations with the Navy. He wanted to get on with his life and to avoid being drafted, which was a distinct possibility given the hardening of the Cold War abroad and the pressures at home that would soon erupt into full-blown McCarthyism. He deferred the draft, getting clearance to continue his higher education (something he wanted to do anyway), the limit being the completion of a doctorate and, therefore, in 1949 applied for a Fulbright

scholarship to write a doctoral thesis at the London School of Economics. The writing style, as expressed in his research proposal, is inimitably that of the later Gilson, only more prolix:

> The field that I propose to devote research to is that of colonial administration in the South Pacific, *i.e.* the problems of government in dependent areas in relation to the impact of western culture upon that of native populations. The purpose of the investigation is to draw upon the experience of European nations and the United States in the area up to this time to serve as a basis for a comparative study of colonial policy and an evaluation of a future program of administration, particularly in the light of recently assumed responsibilities by the United States in the form of trusteeship in the former Japanese mandates.[6]

He chose London on the misapprehension that the sources were there. His professors exhausted their stock of superlatives in recommending this "outstanding young scholar" who had compiled "one of the highest grade point averages [as an undergraduate] in my recollection." He was, in their estimation, "dependable" and "hardworking," "unusually gifted and intelligent," "especially well qualified to carry on independent study and research" and possessed of "broad interests and easy social graces." For unexplained reasons, he was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to New Zealand, and he arrived in Wellington in October 1949 as part of the inaugural intake of Fulbright graduate students to that destination[7] and for the first time enjoyed being on a generous allowance. Enrolled at VUC in Wellington as a "special student" in political science, Gilson pursued independent study in the history and government of New Zealand, the Cook Islands, and Western Samoa during the long vacation. Thus, he had little contact with other students for the first four months of his stay. He also missed meeting the two VUC academics whose interests most closely corresponded to his own: Ernest Beaglehole, who had published on New Zealand's Island Territories, was on study leave; and Mary Boyd, the Pacific History lecturer, who later became a close friend, was tied up with domestic responsibilities.[8] The timing of his visit was also unfortunate in that he missed the Pacific Science Congress, which was held in Auckland and Christchurch in early 1949. When classes resumed in March, he attended "lecture seminars" in New Zealand government, Australian executive functions, and Pacific history.[9] As chance would have it, the 1950 Pacific history course at VUC was taught by Ruth Allen, a 32-year-old replacement lecturer. There were tragic parallels in their subsequent careers. Allen also worked on a massive book, a history of Nelson province;[10] she too was stalked by the shadow of ill-health (in her case a

long-term kidney disorder); and neither was fated to see their works in print. But that was in the future. Meanwhile, Gilson's stay in Wellington was pivotal: He committed himself to Pacific history, and he met the person whom he married.

That cohesive and agreeable group of Fulbright students did not want for a social life in Wellington. Gilson and fellow Fulbright scholar Fred Simmons stayed for the first six months at Weir House (VUC's residential college) and became very popular. Gilson was extremely good-looking in his early 20s, and contemporaries recall that he was "immensely likeable and fun-loving," an intelligent and charming conversationalist, and "genuine." Although not very athletic and never one to join sporting activities, he enjoyed himself from the sidelines and for a beer in the pub afterward. A fellow student remembers the younger Simmons as the "livelier" of the two, Gilson by contrast showing the seriousness of purpose that was integral to his nature. Another student recalls that Gilson and Simmons were much wider in their thinking and outlook on life than Weir House students, who were often part-timers and whose worlds revolved around sport, work, and study. The two Americans could converse intelligently about anything, and, while they certainly saw things differently from New Zealanders, they were more reflective and less insular.[11]

Little wonder, then, that Gilson caught the eye of a young school teacher, fresh out of teachers' training college. He and Miriam Baird met at a home brew party, as it happened, and he invited her to the cinema. His line was that not all Americans were the urban dwellers and jerks depicted by Hollywood, or words to that effect, and would she care to accompany him to one such viewing? In other ways, too, Gilson made the most of his opportunities in Wellington. By his own account, his easy entry into student life at VUC stemmed from refusing to become a "propagandist" for the American way of life—with which he was becoming disenchanted, in any case. The same, one presumes, applied to the several occasions he accepted invitations to talk about American life on radio, to school girls, and to the Wellington Junior Chamber of Commerce.[12]

New Zealand at that time was an exciting place for anyone with Gilson's interests. There had been problems in New Zealand's Pacific Islands dependencies and the previous Prime Minister Peter Fraser had responded by laying the foundations for a radically new approach to promote self-government. The 1947 Samoa Amendment Act had created a Legislative Assembly where a Samoan majority held the purse-strings. In the Cook Islands, dissatisfaction with New Zealand rule had resulted in damaging criticism from left-wing elements in the New Zealand trade union movement. Internally, there was the vexed issue of the role of local island councils, among

other things.[13] It was a propitious time to visit these places, and Gilson's Fulbright grant stretched far enough to cover the costs of travel and accommodation. The Department of Island Territories—which had so little confidence in its own men-on-the-spot—saw in Gilson a source of informed advice and asked him to write a report on the administration of the Cook Islands. In late May, with Island Territories facilitating his travel plans, Gilson set sail for the islands.[14]

First Experience of the Islands

His fieldwork journals reveal an alert and perceptive observer and bear out Davidson's contention that he mixed easily and made many lasting friendships with both Europeans and Islanders.[15] Unfortunately he arrived too late in Suva to observe the so-called Nasinu Conference, a South Pacific Commission initiative to sponsor a regional identity by organizing a meeting of Pacific Islander elite.[16] Within a couple of days of arriving in Suva, whose humidity he found insufferable, Gilson observed that "one does notice the tension in this place" between Indians and Fijians and went on to observe that "the two cultures and societies, in their present forms, are incompatible." It is noticeable that Gilson's journal picks up the moment he gets to Western Samoa. He clearly related to the place right away. On the day of his arrival "everybody advised me to contact [Jim Davidson] immediately," which he did.[17] Davidson was on secondment from Cambridge University as supernumerary member of the Samoan civil service under the designation Trusteeship Officer; he was also Professor-elect of Pacific History at the new-established Australian National University. That meeting would determine Gilson's future as historian of Samoa and long-term colleague of Davidson in Canberra. In other ways his Samoan sojourn bespoke the shape of things to come as he searched for lost documents and took a political scientist's interest in contemporary affairs. He was a frequent observer of Legislative Assembly debates and made severe criticisms in his journal when confronted with arrogant and foolish behavior in local politics. That aside, he got on with people—both Samoan and European—and dodged the attentions of a young lady who was "a tough one to lose." He identified with the Samoans' aspirations for self-determination, and, while noting the widespread "cynicism" within the expatriate community on that score, he nevertheless displayed considerable compassion for the predicament of the vegetating European who had lived in the islands too long. His diary does not quite reveal the misfits that inhabit the four short stories that Somerset Maugham wrote on the basis of a visit to the Samoas in 1917.[18] All the same, it was not too late in 1950 to find people, whether or not in government employ, who were at odds with their social environment; and Gilson stumbled across his quota.

His four weeks in the Cook Islands were largely taken up in his investigations for his report and research for his eventual thesis, although he found time in the evenings to join friends and listen to classical records. But it was Samoa that captured his heart. Nevertheless, after three months in the islands he was dying to get back to Wellington and to Miriam. By then he had got an extension to his Fulbright award to continue his studies in London. In a crowded last few weeks, he wrote his report for the Department of Island Territories, bade a temporary farewell to Miriam, and took his leave to London.[19]

From London to Canberra

Gilson left Wellington in August 1950, stopping over in Sydney to observe the South Pacific Conference, which inspired his first academic article.[20] Miriam joined him in London, and they were married. They made the half-hour train journey each day to work—Miriam to her school teaching job and Gilson to the Public Records Office or to Livingstone House, where the Records of the London Missionary Society were then held. Enrolled at the London School of Economics and under the supervision of Raymond Firth and Lucy Mair, he worked hard at his thesis on the Cook Islands, becoming an accomplished documentary researcher on a self-taught basis. He thoroughly enjoyed this period of his life and made valuable professional contacts. There was never enough money to do all the things he and Miriam wanted, especially after the second Fulbright grant terminated in June 1951, but they did manage a couple of European tours.

In April 1952, Gilson was awarded a doctoral scholarship in Pacific History at ANU. The following month he did one better and was offered a three-year appointment as Research Fellowship, again in Davidson's Department.[21] He entered the ANU payroll in September 1952 but spent the next six months in London completing his thesis and commencing research on nineteenth-century Samoa. In April 1953, he arrived in Canberra with a 395-page thesis on the Cook Islands, which Davidson later said was of "Ph.D. scope and quality."[22] The reason it was a master's thesis and not a doctoral dissertation was to defer his service requirement with the U.S. Navy. By that stage, Gilson had officially separated from the U.S. Navy, and, although still eligible for the draft, he was not too worried about it, being married and not to the limits of his graduate education. It is not that he approved of Communism. Far from it. But military measures, he reasoned, were not the way to address the "basic question of doing something about the root causes of the spread of Communism in backward areas—where we are most vulnerable."[23] An added attraction of Canberra was that Miriam could be nearer "home" than in the

United States. On their way to Australia, they passed through California, and Gilson was appalled at how McCarthyism had devastated the lives of some of his old friends.[24] So the Canberra appointment made sense in more ways than one: he did not want to live in the United States' rancid political climate; his study of French politics deterred him from making Europe his field of academic specialization; but he did want a job where he could pursue his work on Samoa.[25]

It is not hard to see why Davidson was keen to appoint Gilson. He liked him and respected his ability to the extent that, within a fortnight of first meeting, they had discussed sensitive political matters bearing on Samoa. As well as their shared outlook and interests, Gilson was a proven documentary researcher at a time when archives-based monographs were needed to offset a slender historiography where generalizations had outrun actual research. Between the wars, Pacific studies had focused on ethnography. The small corpus of historical writing during this time was largely imperial history (with a leavening of travelers' tales and reminiscences of the "from my verandah" kind), which Davidson was anxious to displace with the more anthropologically informed study of "multi-cultural situations"—especially when the one existing history of an island group based on solid archival research—Ralph Kuykendall's *The Hawaiian Kingdom*—was weak in defining the structure of local society.[26] Davidson, moreover, felt that many of the explanations in the one academic anthropological text on Samoa—Felix Keesing's *Modern Samoa* (1934)—was "inadequate or, at times, almost meaningless."[27] Gilson's combination of archival experience and fieldwork admirably qualified him as a prospective practitioner of the new ways that Davidson sought to promote, and he shared Davidson's interest in contemporary Pacific events. An added bonus was his interest in the location and preservation of documents, which was a major concern of Davidson's at the time. Gilson's arrival brought the Department's strength to three staff members (the others being Davidson and Francis West), and two Ph.D. students (Colin Newbury and Bernard Smith), all of whom were to pursue distinguished careers.[28]

Canberra was then a fly-blown and somewhat featureless "country town of about 27,000 people [compared to today's 250,000]. . .very raw indeed on the outskirts," hardly becoming of a Federal capital and lacking the comforts and amenities that are now part of its physical and cultural landscape. ANU was even more embryonic: the familiar landmarks—University House, the Menzies Library, the Coombs Building, and the Chancellery—were still in the future. Staff and students were housed in a collection of unprepossessing prefabs known as the Old Hospital Buildings. The quaintness of their set-up, "with Law housed in what had been the Labour Ward and [the geomorphologist] in the operating theatre because it had a sink," inspires a

certain nostalgia for "dear, dead days beyond recall."[29] In reality, the OHB was wretchedly appointed and frigid in winter. The town itself was unsophisticated for the most part, gossipy and heavy drinking.

Although never enamoured of Canberra, the Gilsons did make lasting friendships, such as that with Colin and Norah Forster, another recently married couple with whom they shared a large divided house. It was a good arrangement. Without impinging on each other, the two couples enjoyed many social occasions, and Gilson is remembered as a superb breakfast cook who made "a mean flapjack." The Gilsons were also close friends with the political scientist Robert Chapman and his wife Noeleen. He and Gilson were kindred spirits—compatible in their attitudes, appreciative of each other's enthusiasms and apt to converse well into the night. In a place where people had to make their own amusements, there were some memorable parties, not least when Gilson poured pure alcohol (that had been purloined from the medical school) into a bowl of punch that was sitting near an open fire and nearly set the chimney alight.[30]

Gilson was also a presence within the Department: "he brought an atmosphere of the islands to his work," recalls Niel Gunson, a former student. "His unusual working hours (mid-afternoon to the small hours of the morning), his fondness for Polynesian food and dress, and his fund of anecdotes and knowledge of Pacific personalities, were an inspiration to younger and less experienced Pacific scholars;"[31] and his readiness to share the fruits of his research is legend—and amply testified to in the acknowledgment sections of monographs and journal articles. Gilson also lived up to Davidson's expectation as "an excellent colleague, with a passion for thorough and exact research."[32] But his affability and generosity stopped well short of tolerance for mediocre scholarship, not least in his own specialized field: he applied to others the same impossible standards he set for himself and was downright critical of sloppy research.[33]

Gilson continued with his work on Samoa. "I am," he explained, "concentrating on the political reactions of the Samoans in the European 'contact situation.' I am not interested in diplomatic problems, overseas political issues, tariffs, or the like except insofar as knowledge of them may be useful in providing the general historical context or to the extent that their strictly local aspects may have figured in Samoan political change."[34] Davidson was only slightly exaggerating when he observed that Gilson "ransacked the world for every scrap of evidence relevant to his subject;"[35] testimony to this is the 201 folders of carefully typed research notes on Samoa. Indicative of his anxiety to consult anything and everything, he would call on Margery Jacobs, the Sydney-based historian of German activity in the Pacific, and would borrow her research notes on German Samoa; they were tangential to his

own research, but he insisted on seeing them all the same.[36] Gilson also spent a great deal of time locating documentary material that had been given up as lost, as well as organizing the microfilming for libraries in Australia and New Zealand of Pacific material in British collections. He tracked down, among others, the records of the German colonial administration, in Samoa, and the Gurr Papers, in an Auckland attic.[37] While Harry Maude and Robert Langdon are remembered for Pacific Islands manuscript retrieval and microfilming, there is a tendency to forget that Gilson (and Davidson) were the precursors. At the same time, Gilson was a good academic citizen and willingly put time and effort into giving colleagues a hand. Most notably, he made available the fruits of his Cook Islands and Samoan research to the demographer Norma McArthur and provided detailed comments on her chapter drafts.[38] He also maintained a sizeable correspondence, and one does suspect that such activities served, consciously or not, as a diversion from his real work. Davidson described him as having "a certain thoroughness in his manner and a tendency to build an argument as an Australian bricklayer constructs a wall; the rate of work is not fast but there is no objection to overtime."[39] Realizing that the Samoa book was going to be a long haul and that he needed publications in the meanwhile to ensure the renewal of his Research Fellowship, Gilson extracted a couple of articles from his Cook Islands thesis.[40]

Fieldwork and Back to Canberra

In January 1954, Gilson commenced several months' archival research in Wellington. On this occasion, he was preceded by Miriam, who soon after gave birth to their first child, Helen. In June, Gilson arrived in Apia for fieldwork (with Miriam and Helen following on a "banana boat") and they remained eleven months. Samoa had lost none of its attraction. Nor had Gilson lost his fondness for Polynesian food, and his Samoan was more than adequate for he had taken language lessons before leaving. The Gilsons rented one house, then another, in Apia but otherwise did not live a typical European life, which is to say that they did not do the "colonial thing" of afternoon teas and Friday clubs. Instead, they socialized a great deal with Samoans, and having a young child made them the more acceptable. Gilson traveled extensively around Samoa, taking Miriam and Helen when possible. In addition to fieldwork proper, he kept abreast of contemporary developments in Samoa—just as he had in 1950.[41] Although not a formal observer at the 1954 Constitutional Convention, he gained a detailed appreciation of its proceedings from evening discussions with participants, "though, unfortunately," said Davidson, "he failed to commit his conclusions to writing."[42] As well, this "pleasant, good-looking, rather serious American," as a visitor described him, was unfailingly helpful to fellow fieldworkers.[43]

Gilson also spent some weeks in locating the records of the German administration (1900–1914) and arranging their deposit in the Dominion Archives (now Archives New Zealand). He then bought in to one of those dogfights between academics marking out their turf. Under the misapprehension that a departmental colleague, Francis West, was attempting to muscle in on the work of Marjorie Jacobs, Gilson came close to attempting to block West's access to the records that he had just located.[44] The episode illustrates the sternly disapproving streak in Gilson when he considered that proprieties were being breached. Gilson had come to believe that Jacobs had a prior claim on the study of German colonial policy in the Pacific, including a biography of Governor Wilhelm Solf of Samoa. Adding a sense of urgency was that West was about to take up a Senior Lectureship at VUC, in the same city where the German Samoa records would be held. In fact, West had been planning, since 1953, a more limited study of Solf's governorship of German Samoa, with the family's approval and Davidson's fore-knowledge.[45] Marjorie Jacobs had planned the Solf biography, with the family's blessing, since 1947, but her teaching commitments at the University of Sydney stalled her project and the family, tired of waiting, decided that West should be the recording angel.[46] Ironically, Jacobs never completed her projected work on German Samoa, and West abandoned the Solf biography under the impression that the German colonial records had been destroyed in the Second World War (in fact they had not and, to continue the irony, Jacobs later managed to persuade the authorities in the former Democratic Republic of Germany to permit the microfilming for Australasian libraries of German colonial records relating to the Pacific.)[47] Gilson's misunderstanding of West's intentions suggests a certain lack of collegial discussion within ANU's Department of Pacific History (or was it a case of fieldwork commitments putting them out of touch with each other?). At any rate, all these years later West is astonished that Gilson could have misunderstood his intentions to the extent he did.[48]

Back in Canberra, in April 1955, the pressures were beginning to mount and the bubble was soon to burst. On top of everything else, Gilson began work on the German records that he had salvaged. Trudy Newbury was hired on a twelve-month contract for the massive task of translating them into English. As she progressed, Gilson summarized her translations. That too was a big job involving almost 1,100 typed pages.[49] By then he was getting frustrated by the departmental duties that were always coming his way, by his sense of temporary status in not being tenured, and by the slowness with which he was converting his research into writing, not to mention hostility from the ANU anthropologist Derek Freeman. Colin Newbury, a student in the department and Trudy's husband, recalls that Gilson "occasionally got pretty wound up with himself and with others,"[50] and that Trudy sometimes

found him a hard taskmaster as the accumulated pressures brought out a side of his character not evident in his student days.

A sense of being suffocated by the prospect of wading his way through mountains of documents in several languages is conveyed by Gilson himself in a letter to Mary Boyd:

> Lordy, I don't know if I'll ever see the last of this stuff on Samoa. My office is bulging with files, notes, etc., and even though we have a departmental assistant—a woman who has been doing the German translation—I don't feel that the load is much lighter. There is so damned much in Samoan. So far I've concentrated mainly on the Gurr Papers, which are terrific—well beyond my expectations, now that I can [see] what is there. At first the going was heavy and tedious, but by now I've achieved just enough of the vocab pertinent to the political material to get through it much faster. . . . Anyhow, you get the picture—slogging away at a vast quantity of material, with Samoa coming out my ears. How is it possible for one to get tied up over such a small place? Except at the ANU, that is?[51]

Price of Perfection

For much of 1956, Gilson was Acting Head of the department during Davidson's study leave. Davidson was initially concerned that a mere Research Fellow "would find it difficult to get his view accepted by more senior people," but was later to acknowledge that Gilson carried out the duties "meticulously and with unfailing good sense. Indeed, my only reservation was the amount of time he must have spent keeping me informed. . ."[52] In one sense, it was less difficult than it might have been because Gilson had no other staff members to worry about—they were all on study leave or fieldwork—but he had to supervise all the students.[53] This was also the time the department was helping to build up Pacific manuscript and microfilm collections in Australia; thus, Gilson had his hands full on that front as well.

By and large, Gilson rather enjoyed being Acting Head. But it provided a further distraction from his writing, and he was now living on borrowed time, academically. The bottom line was that his Research Fellowship, which had been renewed for two years, would expire in November 1957;[54] and he could not expect appointment to a tenured position unless he had completed his book. Davidson was concerned but guardedly optimistic, telling a mutual friend that Gilson was now "writing hard" but "working against time." Nevertheless, there seemed "a chance [but] by no means a certainty . . . of making his job permanent . . . ."[55] But as the year progressed, it became evident that Gilson was not going to make it.

Colleagues were aware where the problems lay, their diagnoses differing only in emphasis. Gilson was a meticulous scholar and a perfectionist to a marked degree; there was always something else he had to know before committing himself to a conclusion. He was, moreover, dealing with an intrinsically difficult topic on which he had accumulated an enormous quantity of material: the thousands of pages of laboriously typed research notes are a tribute to his massive industry (and to a certain lack of proportion). Such was Gilson's concern that every statement and pronouncement have the correct nuance that he could literally spend hours getting a single sentence right. Nor did the tangled nature of nineteenth-century Samoa sit easily with his conviction that historical writing was a discipline where compression and elaboration were complementary. It got to the point where his perfectionism became self-stultifying, the book grew out of control, and anguished colleagues looked on helplessly as the deadline came and went.[56]

But there is more to it. The problem was that Gilson's project was too big and ambitious to be completed within the allotted time, at least as the intended monograph. The outline of nineteenth-century Samoan history had been etched, but the existing texts on Samoa were traditional imperial histories about international rivalries that gave little insight into indigenous affairs, as were the numerous travelers' tales and reminiscences of the "from my verandah" kind. The only solid ethnography was August Krämer's *The Samoan Islands*. He also had to actually find important sources and arrange for their deposit in libraries, which took time. His thorough and exhaustive research allowed no cutting of corners. Then there were all the departmental duties that came his way. Even taking into account Gilson's tendency to find distractions, there was insufficient opportunity, in little over five years, for actual writing. He did, in one way, leave his run until too late, and Davidson did urge him to start writing. But given the scale and complexity of his project, he was not in a position to start writing in earnest until 1956—after his fieldwork, and while still working on the German colonial records and the Gurr Papers, and when he was Acting Head of Department. By then, of course, time was too short, and he found himself under enormous pressure.

What he should have done, as Davidson pointed out more than once, was to cut the topic to suit the time available by reducing either the chronological span or the thematic range. The idea was that Gilson should submit part of his work in thesis form and arrangements were made in 1954 for his admission by ANU as a Ph.D. student. (It was a common enough arrangement in those days at ANU for a member of faculty to be doing a Ph.D.) He let his doctoral candidacy lapse but renewed it in August 1957, the idea being that he complete a thesis by the end of January 1958. That would enable him to creditably apply for an upcoming tenured position, which Davidson was

confident that he would secure, and open the way to his writing the more comprehensive book. Davidson, in fact, did everything humanly possible to retain Gilson. He had the highest regard for Gilson's abilities, confirmation of which he had received on his way to London on study leave the previous year. Stopping off in Los Angeles, a number of USC professors entertained him royally, for no other reason than his association with one of their favorite former students.[57]

Realizing that Gilson needed more time, Davidson embarked on an 11-hour tactical ploy. He pointed out that Gilson was an "an exceptional case," having performed many duties not usually expected of a Research Fellow, including the location of documentary sources and the Acting Headship of the Department on a fairly frequent basis. But it was also spelled out that, despite urgings, Gilson had done very little writing during Davidson's study leave. This was not, in Davidson's words, "wholly satisfactory," and there may have been a feeling that Gilson, as a member of faculty, had the edge over the typical Ph.D. student straight out of an honors degree. In any event, Gilson was given a grant-in-aid at the rate of his salary for a further four months, with the expectation that he finish his manuscript.[58]

But again Gilson failed to deliver. He was too embarrassed to ask for further consideration; but Davidson made a final attempt to keep him on the staff:

> Mr. Gilson has refrained from making any request himself for an extension, but it has been clear to me for some little time that it will not be possible to consider his candidature for a permanent Fellowship for several months more. I should, therefore, like the Board [of Graduate Studies] to consider extending the period of the grant-in-aid for a further two months. When I informed Gilson that I proposed to take this action he asked me to make it clear that he would rather forego an extension of the grant-in-aid than cause the University any embarrassment. Despite Gilson's scruples, I feel that there is a very good case for this extension and I hope it will be agreed to. I would only add that this extension, if granted, will definitely be the last one.[59]

Davidson's recommendation was accepted. But Gilson was still unable to complete on time, not the least was because, in a moment of despair turned into madness, he destroyed some 200 pages of text that he felt were not up to scratch.[60] He was now out of a job and had little prospect of finding another academic position, at least in the short term. He seemed to be living his life backward. Less than ten years after being a star graduate student at

the University of Southern California, with the academic world seemingly there for the taking, Gilson's universe had unraveled.

Years of Turmoil

When the gods withdraw their favor, they do so with a vengeance. The next few years were very difficult for the Gilsons. Although Gilson did not especially like Canberra, he had nowhere else to go. There were now two children (Helen, aged four, and Michael, almost two) and the only source of family income was Miriam's job as a research assistant in demography at ANU; this hardly amounted to a living wage for that size of family and their savings were soon exhausted. Gilson's unusual working hours were an added strain because it was difficult to keep young children quiet when someone was trying to sleep by day and work at night—and Michael was a lively boy whose antics frequently exasperated his overwrought father. Paradoxically, Gilson's writing slowed appreciably once he was out of a job and freed from departmental responsibilities. By midyear he was becoming very reticent about his thesis, assuring a worried Davidson that it would soon be finished but never nominating a date. Subconsciously he was finding ways to avoid writing, as friends recognized.[61] His mind wandered and at one point he toyed with the idea of coauthoring, with Harry Maude, a book on the Peruvian slave trade—which Maude eventually published in his retirement.[62] At other times he hankered to revise his Cook Islands thesis for publication. A growing despondency produced, or more probably intensified, fatalism about his family history of heart attacks. Certain that he was sitting on a time-bomb and would die young, he allowed his health to deteriorate and put on weight. The result of these difficult emotional times was a disabling listlessness, escapism and diminished self-esteem, which is brought out by his close friend Ron Crocombe, then a Ph.D. student in Davidson's department:

> He used to come to our apartment a lot at night and chat and chain-smoke and drink awful quantities of black coffee. He was not well, far overweight and did not exercise. . . When he came home [my wife] Marjie would feed him and chat but eventually give up and go to bed, and when I could not last any longer (at early hours of the morning) I would also say to Dick I had to sleep and that he was welcome to stay and I'd leave more coffee and biscuits out and sometimes he would just stay on alone in the lounge. To say he was in a daze would be wrong. He always had fascinating and insightful things to talk about, and he was a charming and highly intelligent person. And yet in some ways he was in a daze or suffering from a

> blockage. . . .Miriam, who really loved Dick but despaired about his inability to finish things, made a special point of saying to me several times that if I let Dick come around all the time I would never get my thesis written (but it's hard to throw friends out when they turn up and say "Could you just spare me a minute to discuss x or y" and then stay on till 3 a.m., always saying ten times a night "I must go. Let's just have one more coffee and then I'll go," but didn't).[63]

Another friend who sustained Gilson was his former neighbor, Colin Forster. Gilson was by then in a very depressed frame of mind and needed all the help he could get, so he would phone Forster from time to time, and the two would go to the pub and talk about Gilson's situation. It was good therapy and, while not solving Gilson's problems, certainly eased the pressure.[64] But the compassion of friends could only go so far. It got to be too much, and Gilson became somewhat reclusive. His status as a doctoral student meant that he kept his office in the department, which he preferred to use at night—partly to get some peace and quiet and because he felt embarrassed and wanted to avoid people. Davidson tried to keep the door open for Gilson's reappointment, assuring that he stood a chance if he completed the manuscript of his book by early 1959. It will never be known whether Gilson could, as he said, have completed a thesis expeditiously had he not redirected his attention to the book. Actually, Davidson kept the Senior Fellowship (a tenured appointment) open well beyond that time.[65] Gilson continued to be unrealistic about the completion of the book, telling Harry Maude in August 1959 that he expected to have it written by the end of the year when in fact he was nowhere that far advanced.[66] Davidson was finally compelled, in 1960, to fill the vacant position that he had been keeping open for Gilson, and it went to Francis West. Once again Gilson missed the metaphorical bus despite the driver waiting for him.

It was ghastly (for Miriam as well), and the accumulated stresses drove Gilson to the edge of a nervous breakdown. Being out of work and unable to make headway on his manuscript were body blows to Gilson's self-esteem. At least his status as a Ph.D. student enabled him to maintain his office in the Old Hospital Buildings, but probably the harder he tried to write, the less he was able to do so. A frequent enough paradox of writing is the correlation between getting behind schedule and an inclination to find distractions, or else the constipated writer simply gags. Gilson would slink into his office at night and often end up reading detective novels, while probably hating himself for it.[67] His only earnings for over two years came from writing for encyclopedias, which would only have amounted to pocket money. Gilson did far more of this than is evident from the bibliography of his writings, the

reason being that a change in editorial plans resulted in *Encyclopedia Britannica* not publishing several of the entries he had written.[68] We can hope he was paid for everything he was commissioned to write, whether or not it was actually published.

Somehow Gilson managed to maintain a semblance of composure. When relaxed he was still a great raconteur and a witty conversationalist. And his sense of humor was alive and well, if sometimes grim. He could not stand the neighbors on one side, who were English immigrants of the "whingeing Pom" variety. They went away one weekend so Gilson stripped their plum trees, to give them valid cause to whine. Nor did he forsake a sense of parental obligation (or his Americanisms). His daughter Helen recalls that he insisted that she and her brother Michael go to school with "doorstop" sandwiches stuffed with wholesome filling, as any good American parent would do for his children. Their schoolmates often teased them for being different and giggled when the contents of the sandwiches spilled out. All Helen and Michael wanted was thin white bread with a smear of Vegemite like everyone else, rather than the nourishing creations of their conscientious father.

All the same, it was a miserable time for Gilson, and the agony compounded in March 1960 when ANU discovered that its employer's contribution to Gilson's superannuation premiums had been overpaid to the extent of £234. 18s. 6d, of which some £148 related to 1959 when he was not even a staff member. Although aware of Gilson's "precarious financial state," ANU wanted to be refunded with 5% interest. It would have been reasonable in the circumstances to tell the university to pay for its own mistakes and to be more careful in the future, or at least to have demurred over the 5% interest. But Gilson was in no position to argue, much less stand his ground, because this would prejudice the possibility of upcoming work for ANU. Fortuitously, Davidson wanted someone to compile a calendar of manuscripts in New Zealand collections relating to the Pacific Islands. Harry Maude was unable to do it during his upcoming study leave, and Gilson, who was in reserve, got the job. With this in mind, he prevailed upon ANU that the repayments, plus interest, be paid in equal fortnightly installments from the beginning of September 1960, when he would possibly be in work again, until the end of the following year.[69] He never mentioned any of this to Miriam, who only found out when I innocently raised the matter some 40 years later. By now, he desperately needed a break from Canberra, and his family needed a break from him.

On the Mend

In New Zealand, Gilson stayed with his parents-in-law, received treatment for his emotional state, and renewed old acquaintances. He also wrote his

only book review[70] and worked his way through the archival records, sending regular progress reports to Harry Maude, and he ordered microfilms on behalf of the department.[71] Much of the previously scattered manuscript material had by then been deposited in the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington and in the Auckland Institute and Museum, which simplified matters.[72] Nevertheless, Gilson had a difficult time in rehabilitating himself. In order to make enough money to repay his superannuation debts, he took casual work in wool stores and on the wharves, which he initially found very tiring.[73] There was also a "schmozzle" that resulted in Gilson finding alternative accommodation in the near-city suburb of Thorndon, a short walk from the Turnbull Library. This was something else that Gilson concealed from Miriam, as did her parents for that matter—and successfully, because some forty years later she was unable to tell me anything about that either. Nevertheless, Gilson's fragile emotional state must have been disconcerting and productive of unease within the household: In those days in New Zealand people were not supposed to have near-nervous breakdowns, especially someone married into the family, and not the least when the father-in-law happened to be the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand.[74] Gilson was still a bit fragile when he returned to Canberra in early 1961, but at least his batteries were recharged and his morale restored to the extent that he could say that the "demons" that had possessed him over the past few years had been exorcised.[75] With renewed enthusiasm, Gilson got stuck into his writing: "he works like a beaver on a split second schedule," said Harry Maude, "and is in imminent danger of completing his thesis."[76] He maintained his night-owl habits of sleeping by day and working by night, and by the end of the year, it would appear that thirteen of the eventual sixteen chapters of his book were typed up in their final form.[77]

By that time, Gilson was happily preparing to return to California. He had sent an SOS message to Russell Caldwell, who had taught him history at USC, explaining his predicament. A horrified Caldwell urged Gilson to break with Australia and return to California before he ended up on the academic scrapheap. The Los Angeles State College (now California State University at Los Angeles) was rapidly expanding, and Caldwell suggested that he approach the Department of History for a teaching position. In short order, Gilson was offered an Assistant Professorship in anthropology, which he took up in early 1962.[78] Thus, the political scientist-cum-historian was now to formally redefine himself as a social anthropologist.

Quite apart from needing the job, Gilson was more than ready to go back to California. Canberra and some of its people were not altogether to his taste, and it had been very much on his mind that Miriam had been the breadwinner for the past four years. An immediate problem was how to pay

for the fares to California. Fortunately, Gilson had always collected stamps: One of his Samoan ones turned out to be valuable, and he sold it for over £500.[79] But the Gilsons' tribulations were not quite over. As seemed to be the pattern of any change of address, Gilson went first. He unexpectedly left Miriam to a torrid time that tested even her resolve and inner strength. She tired herself out in finishing a manuscript and in looking after Helen, who had gone down with rheumatic fever. Shortly before the departure date, Miriam drove the family car to Melbourne where she could sell it for a better price. Returning by air to Canberra, there was further drama when the plane circled Canberra for an hour and a half, diverted to Sydney to be grounded for a further two hours, and then back to Canberra. Looking very weary, she and the children departed that same day for Wellington, to visit her parents before going on to California; but the last minute rush must have undermined her resistance because she contracted hepatitis A, and Michael got a light dose. Too ill to move, she and the children stayed with her brother in Wellington for the next two months. Gilson meanwhile was going frantic in Los Angeles, sending postcards every other day. Nor was the adjustment to California altogether easy for Miriam. She couldn't imagine a life outside the workforce and this caused initial difficulty when Gilson said, "For goodness sake, let me support you for a while." As it happened, it took Miriam a while to find work, which was not at all to her liking.[80]

Otherwise, things were looking up. Gilson was well on the mend as he got on with his job and renewed old acquaintances. A frequent visitor to the Gilson household was his former USC mentor in anthropology, J. E. (Joe) Weckler, an unhappy man and who committed suicide the following year. Unsurprisingly, the conversationalist and raconteur in Gilson were alive and well, and he was capable of incredibly long, sustained discussions with his old friend. He enjoyed his teaching, liked the students, and put a great deal of effort into his job. He also taught a course at UCLA, to save up enough to put a deposit on a house. He and Miriam finally decided on a typically Los Angeles ranch-style house and signed a contract. The gods, it seemed, were smiling on the Gilsons once again.

Salvaging a Lifetime's Work

Then came that fateful day, 29 April 1963, which put an end to those "happy and hopeful months" in California. The night before Gilson, had been out of sorts and grumpy, and six-year-old Michael, with the heightened perception that children sometimes have, told his sister that something was definitely not right. Gilson went to work the following morning still feeling unwell. He drove home directly after a lecture and asked Miriam to run the bath.

She returned to find him collapsed on the dining room floor. An ambulance was called, but he was probably dead on the spot. With "unexpected and distressing finality," as a distraught Miriam put it,[81] his heart had done what he always knew it would. Miriam was simply devastated. None of their Canberra friends would have been surprised, much less critical, had she left Gilson and taken the children to New Zealand. Buoyed by her strong Christian convictions, she had stood by him; and just when their life was taking an upward trajectory, he was taken from her.

Likewise, Gilson's death was a grievous blow to his friends and to scholarship. His book on nineteenth-century Samoa was unfinished, and his intended work on the German period in Samoa would never get off the ground. As Davidson sadly recorded shortly afterward, "His death, at the early age of thirty-seven, removes a scholar whose work bridged history and anthropology, who had shown real originality of thought, and who was—sometimes to a fault—meticulous in both his writing and research."[82] But Gilson was not going to sink without trace if Miriam could help it, and she set about salvaging his unpublished work. The first fruits were not long in coming. Two weeks before his death, Gilson had presented a conference paper on Samoan descent groups, which was promptly published in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*.[83] The journal's editor Murray Groves (a former departmental colleague in Canberra) paid handsome tribute to him in a prefatory note:

> . . .we publish his manuscript here just as he left it, because it throws much light on a subject which badly needs illumination. Gilson knew intimately, and probably understood better than any other scholar, the intricate and detailed processes of political and social maneuver, negotiation and conflict which have long been characteristic of Western Samoan society and about which archival sources, such as the Lands and Titles Courts, provide ample testimony. . . . [H]e sought above all to understand the nature of Samoan society. [84]

In conclusion, Groves looked forward to "the publication of the larger work which Dick Gilson [had] laboured for many years, a definitive history of Samoan society . . . ."

The article was indeed an appetizer to the main course, but it was a long time between servings, despite the first thirteen chapters being in final form. It was eventually agreed that Miriam would finish the book while Davidson would oversee the editorial work and guide the manuscript through to publication. This was a sensible division because Miriam had often discussed the book with Gilson and was familiar with his handwriting and how he thought.[85]

Helen has vivid childhood memories of Gilson's prolonged discussions over what words to use, with Miriam as his "ear." She and Michael used to think, "Oh no, not this boring adult conversation again." Chapters 14 ("Political Free-for-all, 1876–1879") and 15 ("The Failure of International Concessions") were in draft form. Chapter 16 ("The Condominium") was unfinished. "From these drafts," Davidson explains, "and often exiguous indications of intended documentation, Miriam Gilson constructed a text",[86] and it was no easy task in making sense of Gilson's handwritten corrections and the interleaved amendments and additions on small slips of paper.[87] The publisher no longer has the file relating to Gilson's book; hence, one cannot trace its progress into print. The few surviving records indicate that the manuscript was ready for publication in late 1968 and finally published in early to mid-1970. In order to keep the retail price under ten dollars, the intended print run of 2,000 was increased to 2,500.[88]

Publication took longer than anyone expected—partly because the final chapter was intractable but largely because of Davidson's other activities. Under intense pressure to complete his own book on Western Samoa, he poured his efforts into that; in any case it was a prior commitment. Further delays resulted from Davidson's frequent absences from Canberra on study leave and constitutional advising duties.[89] Miriam started to become concerned. Davidson certainly took longer than he should have to see the work through the publication process, and the publisher's tardiness in getting copy to the printer caused further delay.[90] In those days the route from submission to final printing was lengthy, a case in point being Margaret Kiddle's history of the western district of Victoria. She completed the manuscript weeks before her death in 1958, at age forty-three, and the eventual book took a full three years to appear.[91]

Davidson has been taken to task in some quarters for his handling of Gilson's manuscript. Francis West, a departmental colleague, is appalled that Davidson gave one of his Ph.D. students access to Gilson's unpublished work.[92] Others besides West have been critical that Davidson made liberal use of Gilson's manuscript in his own book on Samoa. The background is somewhat complex. Davidson originally intended to write a "relatively brief account" (approximately 60,000 words) of the political development of Western Samoa from his first involvement in the affairs of the territory in 1947, until the eve of independence in 1961. He always intended to have a contextualizing section on Samoan society and on the history of Samoan relations with the outside world up to 1945, and initially he supposed that this could be covered in some 14,000–15,000 words.[93] Instead, he wrote a far bigger book, containing some 160,000 words of text. What were originally conceived as the introductory chapters—the political history of Western

Samoa to 1946, in 14,000–15,000 words—became four substantial chapters in their own right.[94] The first two chapters—"The Traditional Polity" and "The Impact of the West 1830–1900"—drew heavily on Gilson's work.

Did this "masterly exercise in condensation," as Harry Maude described it,[95] amount to the improper use of a late colleague's unpublished manuscript? Were Davidson's chapters on the nineteenth-century background, as someone once said to me, simply "Gilson written better"? Actually, Davidson put a good deal of his own research into these chapters; this can be specifically documented for the chapter on the impact of the West.[96] Davidson, moreover, repeatedly acknowledges his indebtedness, to both Gilson's manuscript and research notes; and Miriam, whose view is the one that matters, does not feel that his use of her late husband's work was "illegitimate."[97] What is not generally appreciated is the checking of footnotes and the simplification of their form (though not their content) amounted to a great deal of hidden work for Davidson and his research assistants, and Davidson did complete the unfinished final chapter. Nonetheless, the publisher was mistaken when he said a few years later that "There is, in fact, a great deal more of Jim in the last five [sic] chapters of that book than we hope the reader would be aware of, but Jim did his best to achieve a kind of pastiche between himself and Gilson, which make the break between those chapters and the rest of the book hardly distinguishable."[98] Those final three chapters were presented essentially as they were at the time of Gilson's death, although considerably tidied up.

Assessments of *Samoa, 1830 to 1900*

Davidson resisted the idea that Gilson's manuscript be sent to outside readers, arguing that those best able to judge were in his own department.[99] So how did academic reviewers react to this technically unrefereed publication? Quite simply, *Samoa, 1830 to 1900* received a standing ovation.[100] The reviewers warmly welcomed this "massive and indispensable book on an island state during a period . . . no less fascinating than crucial" (Deryck Scarr), with its rare combination of historical research and anthropological insight (Mary Boyd; Francis West). In "what must be the best account of Samoan social organization ever written" (Graham Harrison), Gilson had came to grips with the complexity of Samoa and did "an admirable and commendable job of explaining this complexity and showing how it was affected and how it affected events during seventy years of the nineteenth century" (Judith Huntsman). It was "micro-history but macro-scholarship" (Allan Healy). Not the least, Gilson's "ability to encapsulate paragraphs of meaning in a few words" (Angus Ross) would have been vindication for his concern for fidelity to every nuance of interpretation. In short, it was "a fitting memorial

to a man who so closely identified himself with his vocation and the people of whose history he made himself the chronicler" (G. B. Milner). There was the occasional cavil. One reviewer felt that the oral testimony collected by Gilson was more a social charter than actual history and that "this kind of material really records the ethnographic present rather than the historical past" (West; cf. Harrison). Nevertheless, "Few scholars, probably, would emerge from a posthumous book of this scope and complexity with the credit that Gilson does" (Scarr).

Indeed, as Davidson said, the earlier chapters achieve a "superb" level of analysis.[101] Getting a grip on Samoan motivations was anything but easy given, that "few, if any, Europeans of the time understood the intricacies of the Samoan social order or, in consequence, the nature of the system of conflict and choice which defined and limited the range of action open to Samoans in the conduct of the relations with foreigners." The mastery of his source material and the correction of its European bias in the first two chapters on the Samoan way of life and its structure are exemplary. It is fortunate that the first two chapters survived in their original form; the publisher originally envisaged a much shorter book and wanted to omit the ethnographic chapters. In a rare lapse of literary judgment, Davidson initially suggested that they be summarized and the original versions published separately as journal articles, but eventually these chapters were retained in their original form.[102] The following pair of chapters, on Christianity and the Samoan influence on the church (not the church's influence on Samoans!), are probably the highpoints. The chapter on the American adventurer, Albert B. Steinberger, is a masterly unraveling of the interplay between personality and issues, intrigue and principle. While the historian Barry Rigby conclusively proved that Steinberger was an accomplished con man—which many contemporaries had suspected, and what Davidson could never bring himself to admit—Gilson anticipated Rigby's analysis without having seen crucial documents relating to the activities of H.M.S. *Barracouta*.[103]

The only criticism on a point of substance has been Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese's discussion of the "riddles" of Samoan history—namely, the impediments to historical research imposed by Samoans' use of allusive language and "deliberate ambiguity," coupled with their tendency to withhold delicate information in the interest of a sanitized and idealized past. He takes Gilson—and to a lesser extent Davidson—to task for erring in the matter of title succession.[104] Although precious in the way he expresses himself, Tamasese is probably correct in his specific complaints. But by singling out Gilson for criticism, he is paying him the backhanded compliment of acknowledging Dick as the preeminent *papalagi* historian of Samoa—for if Gilson was capable of being misled by duplicitous Samoans, then what hope is there for anyone else?

Samoa, 1830 to 1900 has something of a reputation for being a difficult read. It is actually an extremely well-written book, apart from a falling off toward the end. Rather than calling the book difficult, it would be better to say that Gilson's "ability to encapsulate paragraphs of meaning in a few words" gives the text a certain solidity and weightiness. It is not what might be described as bedtime reading. For all the vitality and power of its prose, *Samoa, 1830 to 1900* puts even the informed reader's powers of concentration to the test. The middle chapters especially, where complex scenarios are related in a densely constructed narrative, are best read in short bursts. That said, there are passages where sparkle and erudition intermingle, for example the seven-page section on "Economic prospects." But as Miriam stressed to me, a book that is finished by another hand can never be the one its author intended.[105] (In the same way Gibbon's *Memoirs* and Collingwood's *The Idea of History* are editors' constructions from incomplete manuscripts, and what would each book have been had the author lived to see its completion?) The final three chapters of *Samoa, 1830 to 1900* are probably poor approximations to what Gilson would have written had he lived. To compound the problem, Gilson had consciously drafted these chapters more "summarily"—otherwise the book would have grown completely out of control, but the effect was to give the impression of a rush to the finishing line. Imperfect it is, and heavy-going, but a masterpiece nonetheless. His unfinished symphony, so to speak, had assumed more the character of Beethoven's mighty Ninth Symphony, the *Choral*, which is meant to be experienced rather than enjoyed. To quote from one consumer report (Peter Hempenstall), "I have always admired his book on Samoa as being closer to the Davidson model than JWD himself was, in that it is a sensitive reading of the cultural possibilities within Samoan history last century which I have never found wanting after all my other researches into the place and the people."[106] Another admirer is the Samoan historian Damon Salesa, who describes *Samoa, 1830 to 1900* as "a special book." He often finds himself turning to it, "not only for its richness of sources, and the richness of sources, and the strength of its interpretation, but also as a book which has a wonderful sense of the detail of Samoan life, and perhaps most rarely, a sense of the irony of (Samoan) history. . . . It has kept its feet surely for decades, and I expect that it will last in a way virtually unique amongst works of Pacific historiography."[107]

A piece of historical writing always reflects to some degree the personality behind it, and particularly so with *Samoa, 1830 to 1900*. The carefully weighed conclusions, exactness of word and phrase, and the massive research that underpins the enterprise are palpably the work of a raconteur, an enthusiast for his subject, and above all a perfectionist. Jim Davidson mentions Gilson's

quest for "clarity and precision,"[108] and Harry Maude, in his letter of condolence to Miriam, praised his breadth and depth of "knowledge and. . .his ability to isolate what was important from the surrounding mass of detail." But, he added, "If only we could have prevented his commendable striving for perfectionism from gradually turning into an obsession that tended to frustrate his every effort."[109] And Gilson certainly had the personality attributes of the perfectionist. He was principled and conscientious, was demanding of others *and* of himself in professional contexts, as well as having a well-developed sense of right and wrong. Hence, his disapproval, during his 1950 visits to Western Samoa, of the lassitude of a New Zealand official whose "main occupation appear[ed] to be reading magazines over a bottle of beer at the Apia Club," and his shocked disbelief at the spectacle of one of the two *Fautua* (royal princes) reading a comic: "Small wonder that people deplore his backwardness about asserting himself."[110] Indeed, Gilson was a stern moral enforcer with firmly held views on the operational ethics of research and writing. He was not pleased with Derek Freeman's essay on the Siovili cult. Freeman did say that he was "grateful for information made available to me by W. N. Gunson and R. P. Gilson . . ." when in fact he had been given all the relevant references that the pair had located in the London Missionary Society records. Freeman then cited these sources as if they were his own discoveries. Gilson regarded this insufficiency of acknowledgment as downright dishonesty. He was also dismayed at the interpretation that was put on the cult leader reading Dr. Johnson's *The Rambler*, feeling that Freeman had indulged in unwarranted speculation and had knowingly sacrificed accuracy for the sake of literary flourish.[111]

Such attributes and injunctions carried over into his research and writing. At one level was the thoroughness of his investigations and the integrity of his conclusions; for these reasons the term "obsessive detail" does not quite capture Gilson's purpose. It was not an obsession with detail for detail's sake but a principled concern with accuracy—which mutated into a counterproductive obsession with an unattainable perfectionism. A by-product of this perfectionism was Gilson's eternal quest for exactly the right choice of word and phrase which strongly resembles the overtly moral dimension that George Orwell applied to his own writing, founded on a sense of obligation and duty to avoid carelessness and ambiguity, and to eschew the overworked metaphor and the hackneyed phrase.[112] Here is an object lesson for the allusive, evasive and deliberately ambiguous Samoans, referred to by Tamasese. At another level was a blend of the professional historian's stolidity and the storyteller's sparkle, not to mention his shrewd understanding of human motivation and a sure eye for a charlatan. His exposé of Aaron Van Camp as an unprincipled scoundrel is all too accurate. Nor was he fooled by John Williams, the intrepid pioneering missionary of legend, who is depicted

as timorous and being guided by "considerations of expediency."[113] Gilson poured his personality into his book, and the writing indeed proclaims the man.

There was a fortuitous epilogue. By coincidence, an Oxford graduate student Paul Kennedy (who went on to write the hugely successful *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*) was researching a dissertation on the events leading up to the partition of the Samoan Islands, since published.[114] With no foreknowledge of Gilson's work, Kennedy submitted his thesis in 1970, the same year that Gilson's book appeared. Kennedy acknowledged that Gilson's (and Davidson's) work on Samoa showed that the study of Pacific history was heading in a different and preferable direction to his own traditional Great Power approach—which was fine for a European setting but inadequate for handling multicultural situations.[115] Kennedy's narrative begins in earnest in 1884, when Gilson's was tapering off. The research for both works, however, has the same depth of detail and analysis. Gilson is much surer on the culture contact situation, while Kennedy far better relates how Samoa was a component in the complex global interplay of great power rivalries. Thus, two completely independent studies, coming from different intellectual traditions, complement each other and give nineteenth-century Samoa richness unparalleled in Pacific Islands historiography. What is now needed, as Rigby suggests, is a study "to bridge that gap between . . . Gilson's kind of local history and Paul Kennedy's kind of international history," and, thus, elucidate the relationship between the periphery and the metropolis.[116]

The Cook Islands Book

Gilson's thesis on the Cook Islands was also prepared for publication. For years, it had been recognized as the authority on Cook Islands history. Ron Crocombe was aware that New Zealand's Department of Island Territories' copy was in constant demand by scholars and officials and he had urged Gilson to get it into print. But Gilson wanted to revise and shorten it, something that his work on Samoa had precluded.[117] A way out presented itself when Davidson recommended him as the contributor of the Cook Islands section to a historical survey of New Zealand's record in the Pacific Islands.[118] Gilson's death delayed that project, and the substitute author produced indifferent chapters, which made the publication of his thesis the more urgent [119] (A similar situation occurred when Clement Goodfellow's suicide, in 1966, "deprived the second volume of the *Oxford History of South Africa* of two chapters and considerably weakened its political backbone."[120]) At Miriam's request, the task fell to Ron Crocombe, who had discussed the intended changes with Gilson in 1959.[121] The manuscript was reduced by

one-third, and Crocombe added material on local government, social organization, and culture change in the outer islands. The editing and revisions were duly completed, and arrangements were made for joint publication by the University of the South Pacific's Institute of Pacific Studies (of which Crocombe was Director) and Victoria University of Wellington (VUW).

It was another long haul. The manuscript was submitted to VUW's cash-strapped Publication Committee in late 1974. The committee was sympathetic but hesitant, for financial reasons and because the text was somewhat dated. It was also worried about the size of the market for a specialized book on such a small island group. Various printing alternatives were considered during 1975 and 1976, and in early 1977 it was agreed in principle to proceed. The following year, arrangements were made that the Central Printery at ANU should produce the book. Then there was proofreading and indexing. In all, it took some four and a half years between the submission of the manuscript and its publication, and not without recurring acrimony between Wellington and Canberra; but in early July 1980, Victoria University Press had the pleasure at last of sending Miriam a copy.[122] The book lacked the depth and finesse of its predecessor but remains the best survey of Cook Islands history to 1950, largely by default.[123]

Family Fortunes

Dick Gilson's academic career has a certain riches to rags quality about it. The exceptional graduate student who was awarded successive Fulbright scholarships and moved to a coveted position at the Australian National University was brought low by his handling of an unmanageable project. It is neither fair nor accurate to regard him as the gentleman-scholar type, where it was not important whether he ever produced. To the contrary, Gilson did not take this easy choice. He drove himself too hard and was at once his greatest critic and worst enemy. He was an indefatigable researcher whose home and office bulged with research notes. He was a perfectionist whose attention to detail and nuance proved to be a stumbling block in the face of a project of such scale and complexity as the political history of nineteenth-century Samoa. The same perfectionism that delayed the result also produced a work of lasting quality. It was his misfortune not to have found a way to cut his topic to fit the format of a Ph.D. thesis, the successful completion of which would have ensured his continued employment to expand his subject into a book. Rather, Gilson collided with a system that demanded outcomes from nontenured academics, while their tenured counterparts remained in their jobs whether or not they produced. At the same time, Gilson was capable of finding distractions, often from altruistic motives, and

was too sociable for his own good. Nevertheless, substantial parts of the book had been written when he found himself out of work in mid-1958. Despite the trying times that followed, Helen remembers her father as the same "compassionate person who often helped and listened to other people, despite his own worries." Harry Maude said as much six months after Gilson's death; and then he added, "Dick was in my opinion the best Pacific historian we have had and Davidson, who is a shrewd critic, has described his effort on Samoa as the best history of any island group yet written. In a way it killed him."[124]

Gilson's premature death left his life's work in limbo. The eventual publication of his two books brought belated, if generous, recognition. The other dimension to the incompleteness of his short earthly existence was his family being left high and dry. Helen was nine and Michael was six at the time of his death. Miriam's inner strength, which living with Gilson's problems had often required, again came to the fore. She returned to New Zealand and took a teaching job at Wellington East Girls' College.[125] In 1964, she was appointed to a lectureship in sociology at Victoria University, a position for which she was hesitant about applying, because her disciplinary qualifications and experience lay elsewhere. But Robert Chapman, who was now back in Auckland, insisted that she throw her hat in the ring, and he backed his judgment with an unequivocal and detailed referee's report.[126] He was endorsed by Jerzy Zubrzycki (her Canberra coauthor), and by W. B. (Mick) Borrie (Miriam's Head of Department at ANU) who gave his assurance that, despite her lack of formal qualifications, Miriam's appointment would never be regretted. "He was certainly right about that," observed Miriam's new boss.[127]

Her career blossomed, despite the pressures of single motherhood. A competent and supportive colleague, she injected a demographic component into the department's teaching, enrolled for a Ph.D., and published the results of her work with Zubrzycki.[128] On a visit to New Zealand, Jim Davidson called on Miriam and was delighted to find that she was doing so well and living in a pleasant house overlooking Evans Bay; he had feared that she would be incarcerated with two children in a wretched state house. In 1970, Miriam married William Vosburgh, a visiting Fulbright professor. By this time, she had been promoted to Senior Lecturer and could look forward to an eventual Readership. Her departure for Pennsylvania left a yawning gap in the department; and all these years later, former colleagues remember her with enormous affection.[129] At her new place of abode, Miriam put the finishing touches on her Ph.D. thesis on family and social change in New Zealand.[130] Just as Gilson's thesis was of value to the Department of Island Territories, so was Miriam's to education policy analysts in New Zealand. She was appointed to the Sociology Department at Villanova University. Starting from scratch all over again as an Assistant Professor, she worked her way up

the ranks, served as Department Chair for a decade, and went into semiretirement in 1993 as Emeritus Professor. The trajectory of her career, as Robert Chapman said to me, "was very much the rise of the deserving."[131]

The children—although they are no longer that—achieved what Gilson originally wanted for himself: they went to medical school and graduated as "real doctors." Helen, who remained in New Zealand, was awarded her Doctorate in Medicine and is currently teaching at the Otago Medicial School's campus in Wellington.[132] Helen made a telling observation in saying that history was perhaps the wrong discipline for her father. Many laboratory scientists, she told me, are also perfectionists: they go back and repeat an experiment until they get a result or else to confirm the result. The big difference is that multiple interpretations are possible with historical scholarship, which can cause logjams of the sort her father experienced, whereas laboratory experimentation admits only one "answer." Medicine is a bit different, Helen hastened to point out: it is an art as well as a science.[133] For his part, Michael moved to the United States with Miriam and, in time, was also drawn to medicine, after completing an engineering degree at Princeton. The implications are not lost on family friends that he became a cardiology specialist, but Michael points out that his choice was probably steered by "the actions of his [father's] life rather than the mechanism of his death." That is to say, while Michael makes no claim to being a perfectionist, he does see the decision to undergo the rigors of medical school test and prove himself as something he inherited from the father.

Finalé

It can be anticipated that time will be posthumously kind to Dick Gilson, as life was often unkind to him. Despite his premonition of untimely demise, his books have enabled him to cheat death in a way he certainly never anticipated. *Samoa, 1830–1900* has not been, and perhaps never will be, superseded as the great text on nineteenth-century Samoa. Such is its soundness and thoroughness, not to mention its sheer scale, that it has had the Beethoven-like quality of inhibiting would-be imitators. Some of the details may be open to correction or qualification, and conclusions here and there might be modified. But the work as a whole remains unchallenged; no one has attempted a similar feat; and every author who strays into nineteenth-century Samoa is indebted to Gilson having been there beforehand.[134] He was, said Colin Newbury, "an exemplary scholar, anthropologist, and historian."[135] Gilson's other legacy lies in the achievements of his widow and children, which provide a measure of consolation about this decent man and able scholar who died too young.

Even so, one suspects *Samoa, 1830 to 1900* is read less often than it ought to be. Specialists on Samoa will find it indispensable, but I doubt whether the book is routinely read by Pacific historians. To do so would lead to the elementary realization that the many alleged new ways were, in fact, the norm among members of the Davidson school. Whether the older generation of Canberra scholars sought to be sensitive to the ethnographic dimension of cross-cultural encounters, and careful not to interpret them in European terms, is not a matter of debate. Nor did they use pretentious jargon, often coupled with insufficient research into the documentary record, much less write about fractured moments on the basis of isolated evidence;[136] and Kerry Howe is right to point out the "reductive moralising" and shallowness of those postcolonialists who "read and deconstruct a single paragraph and find in it every possible sin such as racism, sexism, culturalism."[137] Jim Davidson was perfectly aware how difficult it was "to use documents written by Europeans as a guide to the realities of non-Western society," and Gilson no less so. To repeat, "few, if any, Europeans at the time understood the intricacies of the Samoan social order or in consequence, the nature of the system of conflict and choice which defined and limited the range of action open to Samoans in the conduct of their relations with foreigners." Of *Samoa, 1830 to 1900*, the social anthropologist Judith Huntsman unequivocally stated *at the time* that Gilson "combined perceptive interpretation of diverse historical documents and sophisticated anthropological description to analyse the complex interrelationships of Samoans and Europeans and to explain what happened in Samoan between 1830 and 1900."[138] Gilson more than satisfies the recent calls for ethnographically sensitive readings and attention to the interpretative dimensions of archival material, both in intention and result. Moreover, the positionality of historians, which has long been recognized in the historical profession, is easily explained in Gilson's case. He wrote a marvellous book, which will always be worth reading—not the least, as John Clive remarked in a different context, because, like *Samoa mo Samoa*, it imparts "the powerful impact of that encounter between personal commitment and scholarly curiosity which lies at the heart of all great history, from the Greeks to the present."[139]

Abbreviations in Endnotes

ANU	Australian National University
IT	Records of the New Zealand Department of Island Territories, Archives New Zealand, Wellington
JPH	*Journal of Pacific History*
JPS	*Journal of the Polynesian Society*

NBAC	Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Canberra
NLA	National Library of Australia, Canberra
PMB	Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, Manuscripts Series microfilm
USC	University of Southern California
VUC/VUW	Victoria University College/Victoria University of Wellington

NOTES

* Many of the unreferenced details come from discussions and correspondence with Dick Gilson's widow (Miriam Gilson Vosburgh) and daughter (Helen Carter), and from comments on the first draft by his son (Michael Gilson). I am most grateful for the family's willingness to assist. Thanks are also extended Paul C. Kovich of the University of Southern California for help at the Los Angeles end and to Susan Woodburn, then the Special Collections Librarian of the University of Adelaide, for facilitating access to the Maude Papers. Comments on earlier drafts by Mary Boyd, Ron Crocombe, Robert Chapman, Niel Gunson, Peter Hempenstall, Clive Moore, Barry Rigby, and Francis West made all the difference to the final outcome. The individuals who told me what they knew about Gilson, and to whom I am extremely grateful, are identified in the endnotes.

1. R. P. Gilson, *Samoa, 1830 to 1900: The Politics of a Multi-cultural Community*, with an "Introduction" and "Conclusion" by J. W. Davidson (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1970).

2. For an assessment, see Doug Munro, "Disentangling Samoan History: The contributions of Gilson and Davidson." In *Texts and Contexts: Reflections in Pacific Islands Historiography*, edited by Doug Munro and Brij V. Lal (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 225–37.

3. The details in this section are largely taken from interviews with Robert and Noeline Chapman (Auckland, 22 July 1999) and Miriam Gilson Vosburgh (Wellington, 22 February 2000) and from various records in Gilson's Australian National University file (no. 6.2.3.12). The latter is held in the ANU Central Archives. Documents from this source are henceforth abbreviated to file and folio number as follows: Gilson's 1952 CV, 6.2.3.12, f.17; Gilson's student record at USC, 6.2.3.12, f.112; Gilson to Registrar, 30 October 1957, 6.3.12, [f. 120a].

4. As well as membership of two honorary societies, Blue Key and Phi Eta Sigma, Dick was President of the Independent Student Council in 1946. Paul C. Kovich, pers. comm., 6 May 2000; *El Rodeo 1947*, published by the Associated Students of the University of Southern California (copy provided by Susan Hikida, USC Assistant Archivist). Little else is known of Dick's involvement in USC student affairs. See Miriam Gilson to J. W. Davidson, 16 November 1968, PMB 1009.

5. Carl Q. Christol (Distinguished Emeritus Professor of International Law and Political Science, USC), pers. comm., 10 May 2000.

6. Gilson, "Statement of Purpose to Study Abroad," R. P. Gilson's file, Wellington, Fulbright New Zealand. (Gail Wilson facilitated access to these records.)

7. Joan Druett, *Fulbright in New Zealand* (Wellington: New Zealand-United States Educational Foundation, 1988), 121.

8. Ernest Beaglehole, "Trusteeship and New Zealand's Pacific Dependencies," *JPS* 56, no. 2 (1947): 128–157; Mary Boyd, pers. comm., 18 March 2000.

9. Gilson, Report to Fulbright Foundation, 12 August 1950, Gilson's Fulbright File. Dick's student record at VUC could not be traced. Probably one does not exist given the informal nature of his studies.

10. Ruth Allen, *Nelson: A History of Early Settlement*, edited by J. C. Beaglehole (Wellington: A. W. & A. H. Reed, 1965).

11. Telephone discussions with Peter Stannard (8 April 2000) and Ian Cross (4 May 2000), and discussion with Bruce Brown (8 April 2006). R. S. (Bob) Parker, who supervised Dick's long vacation reading programme and then taught one of his courses at VUC, also attests to the "attractiveness of his character" (telephone discussion, 20 April 2000). Not much else could be discovered of Dick's student activities in Wellington. He does not find his way into the VUC student magazines (*Salient* and *Cappicade*), and he rates but a solitary mention in *Weir House Magazine*, 1950, 52.

12. Gilson, Report to Fulbright Foundation, 12 August 1950, in Gilson's Fulbright file. Radio New Zealand's Sound Archive does not hold recordings of any of Dick's radio talks. He also wrote a number of articles on New Zealand life and politics for American publications, but I have been unable to locate any such needles in that haystack.

13. Rachel Barrowman, *Mason: A Life of R. A. K. Mason* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2003), 295–97. Fraser's policies are discussed in Michael Bassett with Michael King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song: A Life of Peter Fraser* (Auckland: Penguin, 2001), chs. 14 and 16.

14. Gilson, Report to Fulbright Foundation, 12 August 1950; R. T. G. Patrick to W. Tailby, 19 April 1950, IT, W239, 86/1/37.

15. Davidson, "Introduction," viii. Gilson's three 1950 Fieldwork Journals, on which this section is based, were loaned to me by Miriam Gilson Vosburgh. His movements in the Islands were: Fiji (3–5 June and 31 July to 2 August), Tonga (6–9 June and 30 July), Niue (9–10 June), Samoa (11–29 June and 29–30 July), and Cook Islands (29 June to 29 July).

16. Greg Fry, "The South Pacific 'Experiment': Reflections on the Origins of Regional Identity," *JPH* 32, no. 2 (1997): 180–202.

17. Gilson, Fieldwork Journal, 11 June 1950; Davidson to his mother, 15 June 1950, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, Box 65.

18. Ted Morgan, *Somerset Maugham* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980), 213–17.

19. R. P. Gilson, "Notes on Rarotongan Administration (for New Zealand Government, 1950)," 26 pp. (copy in PMB 1009, reel 7); *Evening Post* (Wellington), 10 August 1950: 5.

20. "The South Pacific Commission: One Aspect of Regional Security," *World Affairs Interpreter* (1950): 181–90 (reprinted by the Caribbean Commission, 1951). Later that year, he published some results of his fieldwork: "Some Administrative Problems in the Cook Islands," *South Pacific* (December 1950): 213–15, 232.

21. Extract from Minutes of the Board of Graduate Studies, 9 May 1952, 6.2.3.12, f.17(a); extract from Minutes of the Interim Council, 27 June 1952, 6.2.3.12, f.26.

22. R. P. Gilson, "The Administration of the Cook Islands (Rarotonga)," M.Sc. (Econ) thesis, University of London, 1952; Davidson to Deputy Registrar, 20 November 1957, 6.2.3.12, f.123.

23. Quoted in Davidson, "Introduction," viii.

24. Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

25. Miriam Gilson Vosburgh, pers. comms., 2 August 2000, 26 October 2000; Ron Crocombe, pers. comm., 25 June 2000.

26. Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, Vol 1: 1778–1854: Foundation and Transformation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1938). The second and third volumes, covering the years to 1893, were published in 1953 and 1967, respectively, and the final volume was completed with the help of Charles Hunter. See Jonathan K. Osorio, "Living in Archives and Dreams: the histories of Kuykendall and Daws." In *Texts and Contexts*, edited by Munro and Lal, 191–201.

27. J. W. Davidson, "Understanding Pacific History: The Participant as Historian." In *The Feel of Truth*, edited by Peter Munz (Wellington: A. W. & A. H. Reed, 1969), 32.

28. Australian National University, *Report of the Council for the period 1 January, 1952, to 31 December, 1952* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1954), 31.

29. O. H. K. Spate, "Early Days at ANU: An Anecdotage," *ANU Reporter* 24 February 1989: 4.

30. Norah Forster, pers. comm., 27 June 2000 (Norah Forster became a Senior Research Fellow in Pacific History at ANU; Colin Forster, then a Ph.D. student, became Professor of Economic History in the Faculties, ANU); Robert and Noeline Chapman, interview, 15 July 1999 (the late Robert Chapman was Emeritus Professor of Political Studies, University of Auckland).

31. W. N. Gunson, Review (of *Samoa, 1830 to 1900*), in *Historical Studies*, 15, no. 61 (1973): 794.

32. Davidson to G. R. Powles (New Zealand High Commissioner, Western Samoa), 21 June 1954, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, Box 43.

33. H. E. Maude to Jason Horn, 23 August 1959, Maude Papers, Series J.

34. Gilson to J. B. Wright, 20 March 1954, IT 1, W239 86/1/37.

35. Davidson, "Introduction," vii.

36. Margery Jacobs, telephone discussion, 20 November 2000.

37. German Colonial Archives, microfilms in Archives New Zealand, R5682–R5961; Papers of E. W. Gurr, Wellington, Alexander Turnbull Library, MS-Papers-0056.

38. Norma McArthur, *Island Populations of the Pacific* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967), v, 362.

39. Quoted in Nancy Phelan, *Pieces of Heaven: In the South Seas* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1996), 33.

40. R. P. Gilson, "The Background of New Zealand's Early Land Policy in Rarotonga," *JPS* 74, no. 3 (1955): 267–80; Gilson, "Negotiations Leading to British Intervention in Rarotonga (Cook Islands)," *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand* 7, no. 25 (1955): 62–80.

41. Gilson to Boyd, 31 August 1954 and 24 September 1954 (provided by Mary Boyd).

42. Davidson, "Introduction," ix.

43. Many details in this paragraph were related or confirmed by Mary Boyd, who herself was engaged in fieldwork in Western Samoa, October 1954 to March 1955. Dick's helpfulness is attested to by another fieldworker, the linguist G. B. Milner, in his review of *Samoa, 1830 to 1900*, in *JPH* 6 (1971): 223, and pers. comm., 27 July 2000. The description of the "rather serious" Gilson is from Phelan, *Pieces of Heaven*, 33.

44. Correspondence between Gilson to Michael Standish (the National Archivist of New Zealand), 20 January to 2 March 1955, NA 4/2, Archives New Zealand.

45. Correspondence concerning the biography of Wilhelm Solf, 1953–1954, West Papers, NLA, MS 9471, Series 1, Folder 3; Davidson to Wright, 21 June 1954, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, Box 43.

46. See Peter Hempenstall and Paula Tanaka Mochida, *The Lost Man: Wilhelm Solf in German history* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), 21.

47. Marjorie Jacobs, "German Colonial Archives: New Guinea and Samoa in the Deutsches Zentralarchiv," *JPH* 6 (1971): 151–161; Jacobs, "Further Archives from Potsdam," *JPH* 12, no. 1 (1977): 86–92.

48. Francis West, pers. comm., 3 March 2001.

49. "Western Samoa: English Summaries of Papers Relating to German Administration, 1900–1914," PMB 479; Australian National University, *Report of the Interim Council for the Period 1st January, 1955, to 31st December, 1955* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1956), 41.

50. Colin Newbury, pers. comm., 24 April 2000.

51. Gilson to Boyd, 2 September 1955 (provided by Mary Boyd).

52. Davidson to his mother, 30 July 1955, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, Box 66; Davidson, "Introduction," vii; Davidson to Deputy Registrar, 20 November 1957, 6.2.3.12, f.123. Dick's three surviving letters to Davidson during this period are in the Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, Box 1.

53. *Report of the Council of the Australain National University for the Year Ending 31st December 1956* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1957), 45–46.

54. Minutes of the Board of General Studies, 29 July 1955 (591/1955), ANU Central Archives; Acting Registrar to Gilson, 15 August 1955, 6.2.3.12, f.107.

55. Davidson to Boyd, 7 March 1957 (provided by Mary Boyd).

56. Davidson, "Introduction," x; Gunson, review in *Historical Studies*, 794; Harry Maude, interview (Canberra, 15 September 1997); Ron Crocombe, pers. comm., 6 June 1999; Francis West, pers. comm., 15 June 1999; Robert Chapman, interview (Auckland, 15 July 1999); Colin Newbury, pers. comm., 26 April 2000. Another such example concerns Jill Craigie's unfinished 300,000-word manuscript on the British suffragette movement. See Carl Rollyson, *To Be A Woman: The Life of Jill Craigie* (London: Aurum, 2005), 316–22.

57. Davidson to his mother, 3 June 1956, Davidson Papers, NLA 5105, Box 66.

58. Gilson to Registrar, 14 August, 6.2.3.12, f.114; Registrar to Gilson, 28 October 1957, 6.3.2.12, f.121; Davidson to Deputy Registrar, 20 November 1957, 6.2.3.12, f.123; Registrar to Gilson, 9 December 1957, 6.2.3.12, f.125.

59. Davidson to Registrar, 20 February 1958, 6.2.3.12, f.130.

60. Davidson to Raymond Firth, 23 July 1958, Records Room, Division of Pacific and Asian History, ANU, Davidson Papers, U.K. Universities folder.

61. Mary Boyd, commenting on a draft of this paper; Ron Crocombe, pers. comm., 25 June 2000.

62. Maude to Davidson, 21 May 1959, Maude Papers, Series C/10. Maude produced the book many years later in his retirement. H. E. Maude, *Slavers in Paradise: The Peruvian Labour Trade in Polynesia, 1862–1864* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1981).

63. Ron Crocombe, pers. comm., 6 June 1999. Crocombe is Emeritus Professor of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific.

64. Colin Forster, telephone discussion, 3 September 2000.

65. Deputy Registrar to Vice Chancellor, 9 March 1960, 6.2.3.12, f.143; Davidson to Maude, 28 February 1960, Maude Papers, Series J.

66. Maude to Horn, 23 August 1959, Maude Papers, Series J.

67. Francis West, pers. comm., 24 November 2000.

68. Encyclopaedia Britannia International to Marney Dunn, 3 December 1968 (PMB 1009, reel 1); *Samoa, 1830 to 1900*, ix, xiii.

69. Deputy Registrar to Gilson, 10 March 1960, 6.2.3.12, f.144; Davidson to Acting Registrar, 27 July 1960, Personal File of H. E. Maude, ANU Central Archives, 6.2.3.26, f.84; Davidson to Accountant, 10 August 1960, 6.2.3.12, f.148; Maude to Gilbert Archey (Director of the Auckland Institute and Museum), 28 September 1960, Maude Papers, Series J.

70. Review (of W.P. Morrell, *Britain in the Pacific Islands* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960].) In *Pacific Viewpoint* 2, no. 1 (1960): 116-17.

71. Gilson to Maude, 21 September, 7 October, 27 October, 13 November, 16 November, 1960, Maude Papers, Series J; *Report to the Council of the Australian National University for the Year Ending 31st December, 1960* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1961), 77.

72. Maude to Davidson, 14 September 1960, Maude Papers, Series J; Maude to Gilson, 28 September 1960, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, Box 54.

73. Gilson to Maude, 25 December 1960, Maude Papers, Series J.

74. See Maude to Gilson, 17 December 1960, Maude Papers, Series J; Miriam Gilson Vosburgh, pers. comm., 30 October 2000.

75. Francis West, pers. comm., 24 November 2000.

76. Quoted in Niel Gunson, "An Introduction to Pacific History." In *Pacific Islands History: Journeys and Transformations* (Canberra: Journal of Pacific History, Inc., 1992), 8 & n.24.

77. Maude to Ethel Drus (formerly a Research Fellow in the Department), 31 March 1961; Miriam Gilson to Maude, 25 May [1963], both in Maude Papers, Series J.

78. Russell [Caldwell] to Gilson, 26 October 1961, Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, Box 57; Maude to Standish, 31 December 1961, NA N/6, Archives New Zealand.

79. Davidson to Standish, 29 March 1962, Archives New Zealand, NA 4/2; Miriam Gilson Vosburgh, pers. comm., 26 October 2000.

80. Edna [Gilbert], (Secretary, Department of Pacific History) to Maude, 14 June 1962, Maude Papers, Series J; Miriam Gilson Vosburgh, interview, 22 February 2000; Helen Carter, telephone discussion, 19 October 2000.

81. Miriam Gilson to Maude, Maude Papers, Series J.

82. "Departmental Annual Report, 1963" [Department of Pacific History, ANU], (cyclostyled), ANU Central Records, 2.1.8.2, Part 2.

83. Richard P. Gilson, "Samoa Descent Groups: A Structural Outline," *JPS* 72: 4 (1963): 372–77.

84. [Murray Groves]. In *JPS* 72:372. Groves' imaginative editorship of the *JPS* is outlined in M. P. K. Sorrenson, *Manifest Duty: The Polynesian Society over 100 Years* (Auckland: Polynesian Society, 1992), 123.

85. I recall these details from a conversation with Jim Davidson in 1972. They were confirmed by Miriam Gilson Vosburgh (interview, 22 February 2000), and Colin Forster (telephone discussion, 3 September 2000).

86. Davidson, "Introduction," x.

87. See PMB 1009, reels 3 and 4.

88. There are a small number of memos and letters, July to December 1968, relating to the book in the Gilson Papers (PMB 1009, reel 1), and a memo from Davidson, dated 15 October 1969, to the Republic of Nauru Fund Committee, asking for a contribution to the publisher of $700 in addition to the $300 offered by the Research School of Pacific Studies (Maude Papers, Series C/24). Davidson showed me the galley proofs when I was visiting Canberra in late 1969. *Samoa, 1830 to 1900* was remaindered in 1981.

89. Davidson to Paul Gabites, 18 November 1966, 19 March 1968, Davidson Papers, Canberra, NBAC, Q25/18.

90. Davidson to Lauofo Meti, 19 February 1969, 6 August, Davidson Papers, NBAC, Q25/18. The revisions were completed in 1968. "Annual Report, 1968" [of the Department of Pacific History, ANU] (cyclostyled), 2.1.8.6, Part 2.

91. R. M. Crawford, "Margaret Loch Kiddle." In Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834–1890* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1961), ix–xii. Margaret Kiddle's (1914–1958) life is a story of immense courage. She literally lived for her book. Suffering from a congenital kidney complaint and kept alive by a dialysis machine, she finished her book in considerable pain and discomfort. Upon the completion of her manuscript, she told her doctor to "turn that thing off" and turned her face to the wall. Russel Ward, *A Radical Life: The Autobiography of Russel Ward* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1988), 230.

92. Francis West, pers. comm., 6 February 2001.

93. Davidson to Michael Turnbull (Editor of Longmans Australia), 9 August 1960; and chapter outline of "Samoa mo Samoa: The Attainment of Samoan Independence," Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, Box 46.

94. J. W. Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa: The Emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1967).

95. Maude, [undated, handwritten comments], Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, Box 11.

96. See the folder "Ch III summary notes," Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, Box 11. Davidson's handwritten notes from Gilson's manuscript are in the Davidson Papers, NLA, MS 5105, Box 32.

97. Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, xi, 436, 442 (on two occasions), 443; Miriam Gilson Vosburgh, interview, 22 February 2000.

98. Frank Eyre (Editor of Oxford University Press, Melbourne) to O. H. K. Spate, 31 January 1974, Spate Papers, NLA, MS 7886, 7/3/2. Davidson's Departmental colleague, Niel Gunson, confirms that Davidson worked hard on those final chapters (telephone discussion, 16 November 2000). Margaret Kiddle's *Men of Yesterday* was also the subject of speculation and misinformation. The manuscript was edited for publication by John La Nauze, who became "widely credited with having carried out major revision" when in fact the posthumous changes amounted to "the addition of two or three paragraphs and occasional abridgement of Kiddle's prose." Patricia Grimshaw and Jane Carey, "Kathleen Fitzpatrick (1905–1990), Margaret Kiddle (1914–1958) and Australian History after the Second World War," *Gender and History* 13, no. 2 (2001): 366; also John Mulvaney, "Second Discussion Session," in *Max Crawford's School of History*, ed. Stuart Macintyre and Peter McPhee (Melbourne: History Department, University of Melbourne, 2000), 69. La Nauze himself was probably the source of these rumors: despite assuring readers that "This is Margaret Kiddle's book, not a book based on her manuscript," he nonetheless left the impression that the manuscript required more editorial input than was the case. J. A. La Nauze, "Preface," Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*, xii.

99. Davidson to Eyre, 25 January 1965, Davidson Papers, NBAC, Q25/19.

100. Mary Boyd, *Australian Outlook* 24, no. 3 (1970): 351–352; W. N. Gunson, *Historical Studies* 15, no. 61 (1973): 794–795; Graham Harrison, *ANU Historical Journal* 9 (1972): 49; A. M. Healy, *Oceania* 41, no. 4 (1971): 315–316; Judith W. Huntsman, *JPS* 80, no. 3 (1971): 391–394; G. B. Milner, *JPH* 6 (1971): 223–224; Angus Ross, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 57, no. 4 (1971): 336–337; Deryck Scarr, *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 16, no. 3 (1971): 458–459; Francis West, *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies* 10, no. 2 (1972): 169–170.

101. Davidson, "Introduction," x.

102. Davidson to Eyre, 25 January 1965, Davidson Papers, NBAC, Q25/19.

103. See Barry Rigby, "Private Interests and the Origins of American Involvement in Samoa, 1872–1877," *JPH* 8 (1973): 75–87.

104. Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese, "The Riddle in Samoan History," *JPH* 29, no. 1 (1994): 66–79.

105. This very issue is discussed by George Bernard and Penry Williams, "Preface" to Jennifer Loach, *Henry VI* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), vii–x.

106. Peter Hempenstall (Professor of History, University of Canterbury), pers. comm., 3 April 2000.

107. Damon Salesa, pers. comm., 28 May 2001.

108. Davidson, "Introduction," x.

109. Maude to Miriam Gilson, May 1963 (handwritten draft), Maude Papers, Series J.

110. Gilson, Fieldwork Journal, 17–18 June, 28 June 1950.

111. J. D. Freeman, "The Joe Gimlet or Siovili Cult: An Episode in the History of Early Samoa." In *Anthropology in the South Pacific: Essays in Honour of H. D. Skinner* edited by J. D. Freeman and W. R. Geddes (New Plymouth, New Zealand: Polynesian Society, 1959), 185n, 198.

112. Michael Shelden, *Orwell: The Authorised Biography* (London, 1991), 430–32.

113. Gilson, *Samoa, 1830 to 1900*, 69, 75 (Williams), 233–39 (van Camp).

114. Paul M. Kennedy, *The Samoan Tangle: A Study of Anglo-German-American relations, 1884–1900* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1974).

115. Paul Kennedy (Dilworth Professor of History, Yale University), pers. comm., 5 April 2000.

116. Barry Rigby, "The Origins of American Expansion in Hawaii and Samoa, 1865–1900," *International History Review* 10, no. 2 (1988): 235&n.

117. Ron Crocombe, "Editor's preface," to Richard Gilson, *The Cook Islands, 1820–1950* (Wellington, New Zealand: Victoria University Press, 1980), vi; Davidson to J. B. Wright, 22 September 1953, and L. J. Davies to Anthony Alpers 28 February 1964, both in IT W239, 86/1/37; Miriam Gilson Vosburgh, interview, 22 February 2000.

118. Angus Ross to Davidson, 10 July 1961, Davidson Papers, Canberra, NBAC, Q25/24.

119. Angus Ross (ed.), *New Zealand's Record in the Pacific in the Twentieth Century* (Auckland, 1969), 24–59, 60–114. See Davidson's acerbic review in *JPH* 5 (1970): 229–231.

120. Christopher Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past: Major Historians on Race and Class* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1988), 150; Ronald Hyam, "The Study of Imperial and Commonwealth History at Cambridge, 1881–1981: Founding Fathers and Pioneer Research Students," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 29, no. 3 (2001): 92, 102n.93.

121. Ron Crocombe, pers. comm., 28 March 2000; Miriam Gilson Vosburgh, pers. comm., 2 June 2000.

122. These details are taken from the minutes of the VUW Publication Committee, vol. 2, 1973–1979; and VUW Press's file on the book. (Fergus Barrowman facilitated access to those records.) The difficulties under which the committee operated are outlined in Rachel Barrowman, *Victoria University of Wellington, 1899–1999: A History* (Wellington: Victoria University Press in association with the Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1999), 300–302.

123. The nearest thing to a history of the Cook Islands at that point was Ernest Beaglehole, *Social Change in the South Pacific—Rarotonga and Aitutaki* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957). Dick Scott's *Years of the Pooh-Bah: A Cook Island history* (Wellington: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991) is an account of New Zealand rule in the Cook Islands with a wonderfully irreverent take on foolish New Zealand "viceroys." Some competent theses on the Cook Islands have been written, but the published scholarly output on this island group remains small.

124. Quoted in Susan Woodburn, *Where Our Hearts Still Lie: A life of Harry and Honor Maude in the Pacific Islands* (Adelaide: Crawford House, 2003), 254, n.26.

125. Mollie D. Gambrill, *Our First Fifty Years: A History of Wellington East Girls' College* (Wellington: Jubilee Committee of Wellington Girls' East College, 1975), 108.

126. Noeline Chapman, telephone discussion, 5 March 2000; Robert Chapman, telephone discussion, 18 April 2000, and pers. comm., 12 June 2000.

127. Jim Robb, "Some Thoughts on Beginnings," *New Zealand Sociology* 11:2(1996): 326–327.

128. See Miriam Gilson and Jerzy Zubrzycki, *The Foreign-Language Press in Australia, 1848–1964* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967); Miriam Gilson, "Population Growth in Post-War New Zealand." In *Social Process in New Zealand: Readings in Sociology*, edited by John Forster (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1969), 29–48.

129. Telephone discussions in mid-April 2000 with Geraldine Boyce and Betty Findlayson (former Departmental Secretaries), David Boardman (Lecturer, now Senior Lecturer), David Pearson (Lecturer, now Reader), and Jim Robb (former Head of Department).

130. Published as *The New Zealand Family and Social Change: A Trend Analysis* (Wellington: Department of Sociology and Social Work, Victoria University of Wellington, 1978; reissued 1988), and partially summarized as "The Changing New Zealand Family: A Demographic Analysis." In *Marriage and the Family in New Zealand*, edited by Stewart Houston (Wellington: Sweet & Maxwell, 1970), 41–65.

131. Robert Chapman, telephone discussion, 18 April 2000. For all that, Miriam goes unmentioned in Hughes Beryl and Sheila Akerman, *Redbrick and Bluestockings: Women at Vic, 1899–1993* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1993).

132. Helen Carter, "Community Based Care for Very Dependent Elderly Persons: An Alternative to Continual Care Hospitalisation," MD dissertation, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, 1994.

133. To my knowledge the only other historian to have taught science subjects as well as history at university level was A. P. Newton (1873–1942), the Rhodes Professor of Imperial History at the University of London, who was earlier an Assistant Lecturer in Physics. Margaret Marion Spector, "A. P. Newton." In *Some Historians of Modern Britain*, edited by Herman Ausubel, J. B. Brebner, and Erling M. Hunt (New York: Dryden Press, 1951), 286–305.

134. E.g. Malama Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa: Traditional Authority and Colonial Administration in the Modern History of Western Samoa* (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1987), ch. 2; Joan Druett, *In the Wake of Madness: The Murderous Voyage of the Whaleship Sharon* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2003), 264.

135. Colin Newbury, *Patrons, Clients, and Empire: Chieftaincy and over-rule in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), viii.

136. E.g. Elizabeth Edwards, 'Time and Space on the Quarterdeck: Two Samoan Photographs by Captain W. Acland." In *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums*, edited by Elizabeth Edwards (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 107–129.

137. Quoted in Malcolm Wood, "Oh Islands in the Sun," *Massey Research* (October 2005): 25.

138. Huntsman, Review (of *Samoa, 1830 to 1900*), 391 (see n. 100).

139. John Clive, *Not by Fact Alone: Essays on the Writing and Reading of History* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), 47.