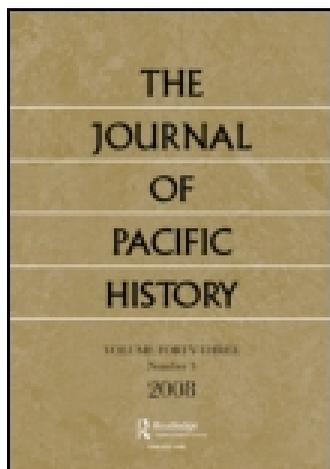


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## Ta'isi O.F. Nelson and Sir Maui Pomare Samoans and Māori Reunited

PATRICIA O'BRIEN

### ABSTRACT

This paper unearths the friendship between Samoan nationalist leader Ta'isi Olaf Frederick Nelson and Māori politician Sir Maui Pomare during the early period of New Zealand's administration of Samoa. It examines the role this friendship played – especially as a line of communication between the Samoan protest movement or Mau, of which Nelson was a leader, and the highest echelons of the New Zealand government – in those years of fraught relations between Samoa and New Zealand. It also explores the significant historical connections that were made, or remade, through this friendship. The relationship between these two men brought Polynesian peoples together in new ways and also directly linked Parihaka, a 19th-century Māori community known for its non-violent resistance against European colonialism, with the later Samoan Mau.

Key words: Pomare, Nelson, Samoa, New Zealand, Mau, Parihaka, Ta'isi, League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission

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On 29 September 1927, New Zealand officials gathered in Dublin for the launch of a new ship. Over 40 other tenders, the New Zealand government had selected the Dublin-based Dockyard Company to produce a vessel to serve New Zealand's growing role as a Pacific Islands power. For the Irish Free State, emerging from its struggles for self-rule, this contract held great significance. The ship marked one of the first products of the Dublin-based shipbuilding enterprise, considered critical to the success of the Irish Free State, then not yet five years old. As the ship was wished well, gratitude was expressed to New Zealand for its faith in the Dublin company. As well as words, the company directors gave a diamond-encrusted watch to Lady Parr, wife of New Zealand's high commissioner to the United Kingdom, to underscore their appreciation.<sup>1</sup> Yet the New Zealand government's decision was not based on support of Irish nationhood. It had opted for the Dublin shipbuilders because they made the lowest bid. This decision the New Zealand government would soon regret.

A week before the Dublin launch, the name of this much-anticipated ship was announced in Wellington. Many options had been suggested, but it was decided to name it after the minister for the Cook Islands and sitting member for Western Maori, Sir Maui Wiremu Piti Naera Pomare (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> Not only had Sir Maui Pomare established an Empire record of 15 years as a minister, but the names 'Maui' and 'Pomare' were well known in the Polynesian Pacific where the vessel was to travel and trade. In his dedication for the *Maui Pomare's* Dublin launch, Prime Minister Gordon Coates stated that

there is no civilizing factor more potent than good communications. Therefore the *Maui Pomare* will supply a long-felt want in bringing the various peoples of the Pacific Islands, in which New Zealand is most deeply interested, closer together and in establishing more efficient commercial relations between the romantic isles and the Dominion of New Zealand.<sup>3</sup>

Sir Maui Pomare sent his best wishes to the ship too. 'Kia Ora to Maui Pomare!' he wrote; 'may she extend the work heroically begun by ancient Pacific sea-rovers and reunite the scattered branches of the Maori race in the great ocean of Kiwa'.<sup>4</sup> The ship was launched, sailing from the oldest restive part of the British Empire into one of the newest, New Zealand's Mandated Territory of Western Samoa.

The *Maui Pomare* was intended to meet several needs. First, it was supposed to convey tropical fruit, especially bananas, from Western Samoa and Niue to New Zealand's South Island, where availability of bananas and other tropical produce

<sup>1</sup> 'Island trade: the new motor vessel Maui Pomare launched', *New Zealand Herald*, 8 Nov. 1927; 'Maui Pomare: motor vessel for the Islands', *Otago Daily Times*, 25 Nov. 1927. Numerous articles on the *Maui Pomare* can be accessed at Wellington, Archives New Zealand (hereinafter ANZ), file IT 1 296 EX 40/8/5.

<sup>2</sup> 'Island trade: new government vessel named Maui Pomare', *Dominion*, 20 Sep. 1927.

<sup>3</sup> 'Island trade', *New Zealand Herald*, 8 Nov. 1927.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*



FIGURE 1: Sir Maui Wiremu Pomare photographed by S P Andrew Ltd, Wellington, Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref: 1/1-019098-F.

was scarce.<sup>5</sup> The *Maui Pomare* was also to carry people, mail and other goods between New Zealand and Western Samoa, Niue and Norfolk Island (an Australian territory included in this vessel's run as it was a base for New Zealand's Melanesian Mission).<sup>6</sup> The *Maui Pomare's* initial run linked the islands of Upolu, Niue and Norfolk to the ports of Lyttelton, Wellington and Auckland. Dunedin was initially slated to be

<sup>5</sup> 'Cheap bananas: government scheme', *Lyttelton Times*, 11 May 1927; 'Yes we want more bananas', *Clutha Leader*, 18 May 1927.

<sup>6</sup> New Zealand Cook Islands Department, *Island Tours by the N.Z. Govt. Motor-ship Maui Pomare to Samoa, Niue, and Norfolk Islands: tourist information and visitors' guide* (Wellington 1928), 13; Gavin McLean, 'Barques, banana boats and Boeings: connecting New Zealand and the Pacific', in Sean Mallon, Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai and Damon Salesa (eds), *Tangata O Le Moana: New Zealand and the people of the Pacific* (Wellington 2012), 123–38.

included but was cut from the *Maui Pomare's* run to the displeasure of locals, who would have to get their bananas by rail via Christchurch.<sup>7</sup>

The vessel was also supposed to 'reunite' Polynesian peoples, as the dedications by Coates and Sir Maui at its launch illustrate. Pākehā (European) New Zealand had been accumulating Polynesian territories since the 1840s. From Māori lands, New Zealand's reach extended into the Pacific in 1901 when it annexed the Cook Islands and Niue. From 1914, New Zealand's Pacific sphere grew with the takeover of former German territories Nauru (where New Zealand was the junior partner to Britain and Australia) and Samoa. Both would be administered as League of Nations mandates from 1921. In 1925, Tokelau was added to New Zealand's list of Polynesian colonies. Each of these territories has a story of its time as a New Zealand colony.<sup>8</sup>

New Zealand's rule in Samoa suffered irreparable damage during its military occupation when the influenza epidemic struck from November 1918, killing over 20 per cent of the population. This catastrophe cast an enduring shadow over the New Zealand–Samoa relationship.<sup>9</sup> Yet as momentous casualties were mounting in Samoa, New Zealand's parliament seemed unaware or unconcerned with what was transpiring there. The epidemic coincided with the armistice and preparations for the Paris peace talks; at this gathering of world powers, New Zealand expected its military occupation of German Samoa to be endorsed and converted to a civilian administration. The epidemic also killed eight thousand five hundred New Zealanders, with Māori dying at rates four-and-one-half times higher than Pākehā. Yet in the midst of this calamity in Samoa and at home, parliamentarians made glowing statements about New Zealand's track record as part of the British Empire.<sup>10</sup> Even Dr Maui Pomare, who would come to know Samoa better than any of his parliamentary counterparts, delivered a speech showing his ignorance of what was unfolding in Samoa. He cited the 'extermination' of Herero people in 'Eastern and Western German Africa' and charged the 'chiefs' of New Zealand to deliver a message commending the New Zealand administration to the 'Council of Nations when the question of the future of the Pacific Islands is discussed'. The message from Dr Pomare, 'as

<sup>7</sup> 'Island trade: lower freight on fruit', *Christchurch Sun*, 19 May 1927; 'Island service', *Lyttelton Times*, 27 May 1927; 'A strange itinerary', *Evening Star*, 22 Dec. 1927; 'Island steamer service: minister's promise unfulfilled, Dunedin badly treated', 19 May 1927, ANZ IT1 296 EX 40/8/5.

<sup>8</sup> Angus Ross (ed.), *New Zealand's Record in the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century* (London 1969); Damon Salesa, 'A Pacific destiny: New Zealand's overseas empire 1840–1945', in Mallon et al., *Tangata O Le Moana*, 97–122; Catharine Coleborne and Katie Pickles (eds), *New Zealand's Empire* (Manchester, UK forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> Government investigators found that at least 7,542 people had died by 31 Dec. 1918, but subsequent to December investigators reported that total deaths attributable to influenza 'totaled 8,500' or over 22% of the population and that 'many people are even now suffering from the after-effects of the disease'. *Report of Samoan Epidemic Commission* (Wellington 1919), 4, <http://www.atojs.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/atojs?a=d&d=AJHR1919-I.2.2.4.46&e=-----10--1-----0Report+of+Samoa+Epidemic+Commission+New+Zealand+1919--> (accessed 19 July 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Michael King, *Te Puea, a Biography* (Auckland 1977), 99.

an authoritative voice of the Polynesia race, [was] that never again must any Polynesian be put under the heel of the despicable Hun'.<sup>11</sup> He spoke on 9 December 1918. This was nearly a month after the notorious ship *Talune*, carrying passengers infected with the disease, had been allowed by New Zealand authorities to dock in Apia.

New Zealand worked to recover its standing with Samoans after this devastation, with little success. In 1919 the incoming administrator, Colonel R.W. Tate, was presented with a humiliating petition requesting that the islands be transferred to the United States or, failing that, Britain.<sup>12</sup> As Samoans quickly found out, their preference for which country ruled them had little impact on the decision made in Europe: New Zealand would continue its rule of Samoa under the auspices of the League of Nations.

Before the mandate was enacted, Samoans had already amassed a considerable history of protest against colonial rule, which had been formally imposed by Germany in 1900. In 1908 dissatisfaction with the erosion of Samoan authority and the imposition of taxes resulted in the formation of the *Mau a Pule*, a rebel movement. When consequently civil war threatened, the rebel leaders surrendered, and as punishment the leaders and their families were exiled to another German colony, Saipan, in 1909.<sup>13</sup> In 1910 a petition claiming to speak for the 'majority of white residents in Samoa' (though it was signed by only five 'Europeans', including Ta'isi O.F. Nelson) was sent to the Reichstag. The petitioners argued that 'before the hoisting of the German flag' in 1900, Samoa was self-supporting and self-governing, but the promise of 'peaceful profitable advancement' under German colonial rule had not met expectations. The 'chief desire' of the petitioners was to have 'those who pay the rates' also 'control the expenditure' – that is, they wanted self-government. They also railed against the many extravagances of German colonial administration and a taxation system that excessively burdened the majority of merchants.<sup>14</sup>

After 1918, Samoans continued to press for self-government, putting their case this time to New Zealand. But the New Zealand parliament's Samoa Act of 1921 ignored these aspirations. It made 'no provision' for 'the people of Samoa to have a voice in the government of the country', Ta'isi O.F. Nelson would later note.<sup>15</sup> As well as the lack of political representation from 1921, the friction also included economic dimensions. Samoans were engaged in a boycott of European

<sup>11</sup> Maui Pomare, 9 Dec. 1918, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates* (hereinafter *NZPD*), vol. 183 (Wellington 1918), 1033.

<sup>12</sup> Malama Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa: traditional authority and colonial administration in the history of Western Samoa* (Suva 1987), 123; Mary Boyd, 'Coping with Samoan resistance after the 1918 influenza epidemic: Colonel Tate's problems and perplexities', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 15:3 (1980), 155–74.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Hempenstall and Noel Rutherford, *Protest and Dissent in the Colonial Pacific* (Suva 1984), 26–32; Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 117–21.

<sup>14</sup> 'Petition forwarded by certain residents of Western Samoa on 4th February, 1910, to the high president of the German parliament in Berlin', appended to *Mandated Territory of Western Samoa: report of visit ...* (Wellington 1927), 44–46.

<sup>15</sup> O.F. Nelson, *The Truth about Samoa: a review of events leading up to the present crisis* (Auckland 1928), 8.

food and goods owing to the steep escalation in their prices while the value of locally produced commodities remained low.<sup>16</sup> In 1922 the Samoan Offenders Ordinance was signed by Tate, which aimed to control 'certain Samoan customs'. Many Samoans, Ta'isi in particular, saw this ordinance as 'vicious' as it permitted 'a sequence of banishments and degradations without trial of sacred and high Chiefs'.<sup>17</sup> The man who assumed the administrator position in 1923, George Spafford Richardson, would preside over this fractious situation. By applying this ordinance in more egregious ways and exacerbating other extant tensions, he inflamed discontent that culminated in the formation, or more accurately, the re-formation of a *Mau* in late 1926.

Though these tensions existed, New Zealand attempted to mask them with rhetoric emphasising the benefit for Samoans of being under New Zealand rule. Such tactics were very pronounced during the 1924 visit to New Zealand of a group of *faipule*, or state councillors, selected by Richardson. The visit was touted as a new chapter in the long history of Polynesia as well as an assertion of Pākehā New Zealand's continuing history of benign relations beneficial to Polynesian peoples. It was also a means for Richardson to legitimise these administration-picked leaders, who were the only Indigenous leaders the government recognised: a stance that disturbed traditional systems of village authority. Richardson's 'vesting' of unprecedented powers in these *faipule*, allowing them to apply new laws and punishments permitted under the Samoan Offenders Ordinance, would become one of the leading grievances against the administration.<sup>18</sup>

During their three-week visit to New Zealand, the *faipule* were accommodated at the YMCAs, which Richardson considered a more-than-generous arrangement.<sup>19</sup> They were taken on a tour around the North Island in the hope that they would be suitably impressed with the country built by their new rulers. They visited farms, milk factories, wool mills, electric power stations and other examples of New Zealand's progress. One highlight was a reception in Rotorua by the Te Arawa Iwi (kinship group), which was described as a 'unique gathering of Maori and Samoans meeting after a thousand years'. Te Rangi Hīroa (Peter Buck), director of Māori hygiene, spoke on behalf of the New Zealand officials. In addition to the Polynesian heritage that Māori and Samoans shared, he said, now 'there was a second tie that bound them together – they were one under the British Flag'.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> E.P. Lee, minister for external affairs, to O.F. Nelson, 15 Jan. 1921, ANZ IT1 EX79/2/1, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Nelson, *The Truth about Samoa*, 8–11.

<sup>18</sup> For a history of the *fono* (council) of *faipule* under German rule see Hempenstall and Rutherford, *Protest and Dissent*, 22. See also clauses 10–12 of the 5 May 1927 petition to the New Zealand government, appendix A to *Report of Royal Commission Concerning the Administration of Western Samoa* (Wellington 1928), xlv–xlv, <http://atojs.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/atojs?a=d&d=AJHR1928-I.2.1.2.7&e=-----1.-1-----0--> (accessed 26 Nov. 2012).

<sup>19</sup> George Richardson to J.D. Gray, 18 Aug. 1924, ANZ IT1 445 EX79/78 part 2.

<sup>20</sup> 'Unique gathering Maori and Samoan meeting after a thousand years', *Evening Post*, 10 Dec. 1924.

The *faipule* tour ended in Wellington, where the mayor of the capital city, R.A. Wright, welcomed them. He spoke of the 'glorious future' when Samoans would send representatives to the New Zealand parliament, just as four Māori representatives were elected to seats reserved for Māori. Such representative measures for Samoans seemed a logical step for one of the world's leading democracies to take, though it was not taken. To the mayor's welcoming words, the spokesman for the *faipule*, Toelupe, responded with a poignant message delivered with good humour. He said they 'would return to Samoa much struck by all they had seen in New Zealand, but they would always remember that Samoa was the Pearl of the Pacific'.<sup>21</sup> Sir Francis Bell, minister for external affairs, also welcomed the Samoan leaders to a lunch at Parliament House with New Zealand dignitaries. After dining on a hearty lunch, Sir Francis made a speech. He evoked the ancient bonds of Māori and Samoans, saying that many believed Savai'i to be the original Hawai'i, or place of Polynesian origin. He also conjured up the myths of New Zealand history by citing the supposed 'equal footing of Maori and Europeans in New Zealand'.<sup>22</sup>

A photograph on the steps of parliament records the occasion (Figure 2). Mr Griffin, the Samoan secretary of native affairs, had taken the trouble of locating warm garments for the visitors though, as this picture shows, not with a great deal of imagination or expense. Sir Maui Pomare is pictured here too among the dignitaries, behind Sir Francis (Figure 3). Sir Maui had already hosted the *faipule* at his Lower Hutt residence, inviting along representatives of North Island Māori.<sup>23</sup> He also appears to have been provided with a script to read at the lunch, but a handwritten annotation on it says, 'not used as occasion for using it did not arise'. The script asked him to

express the appreciation of the Maoris at their own good fortune to have come and ... remained under the protecting wings of the Kings and Queens of Great Britain, and their satisfaction that another important section of the Polynesian Race – the Samoans – has also come under the shadow of that protection.

He was also supposed to note that 'the Maoris are sanguine that the just treatment which is being meted out to the Samoans has always been meted out to the Maoris themselves [and] will enable the Samoans also to appreciate a similar good fortune'.<sup>24</sup> This historic picture elided in one sentence the bitter and ongoing Māori struggle against Pākehā dominance dating from 1845. By not reading the script, Sir Maui showed he was more attuned to politics of New Zealand colonialism in 1924 than he had been when he gave the 1918 parliamentary speech, cited earlier.

Behind the theatre of the *faipule* visit to New Zealand, with the many extravagant professions of friendship across colonial divides, New Zealand's association with

<sup>21</sup> 'Samoan Faipule local programme commenced', *Evening Post*, 16 Dec. 1924.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> 'Samoan chiefs yesterday's movements', *Dominion Post*, 17 Dec. 1924.

<sup>24</sup> Written in the third person, the script must have been intended for Sir Maui, the only Māori minister in the Massey government. Brief notes to Samoan chiefs, 15 Dec. 1924, ANZ IT4 3/7.



FIGURE 2: 'Photograph of visit of Samoan faipule to New Zealand. Group of guests at government luncheon at parliament buildings, 15th December, 1924', ANZ IT9 box 21 7/19. An illustrated article in the *Auckland Weekly News* makes it possible to identify the names or titles of the *faipule* who are flanking Sir Francis Bell in the front row, L to R: Va'ai, Toelupe, Ama, Leilua, Aiono, Bell, Fonoti, Tapuosa, I'iga Pisa, Ainu'u Tasi. See A.J. Tattersall, 'Wise men of Samoa who are on a visit to New Zealand to learn the white man's ways', *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 Dec. 1924.



FIGURE 3: Detail of 'Photograph of visit of Samoan faipule to New Zealand'. Pomare is standing directly behind Bell's right shoulder.

Samoa *was* bringing together Māori and Samoans in substantial ways. One way was through the profound and intimate friendship between Sir Maui and Olaf Fredrick Nelson, also known as O.F Nelson as well as Ta'isi, his *matai* (chiefly) title (Figure 4).

It is easy to see why these two men would become friends. Seven years separated them in age, and they were both deeply intellectual, though they took quite different paths to national prominence. Sir Maui was a medical doctor trained at Battle Creek College in Michigan. He returned to New Zealand as a leader in Māori health and entered politics in 1911. Unlike Pomare, who had received an international tertiary education, Ta'isi was self-taught beyond his formal education to age 13 at St Joseph's Marist Brothers School in Apia. After leaving school he began his working life with the German firm, *Deutsche Handels- und Plantagen-Gesellschaft der Südsee-Inseln zu Hamburg* (DHPG), where his aptitude for business became quickly apparent. He then took these skills and applied them with incredible

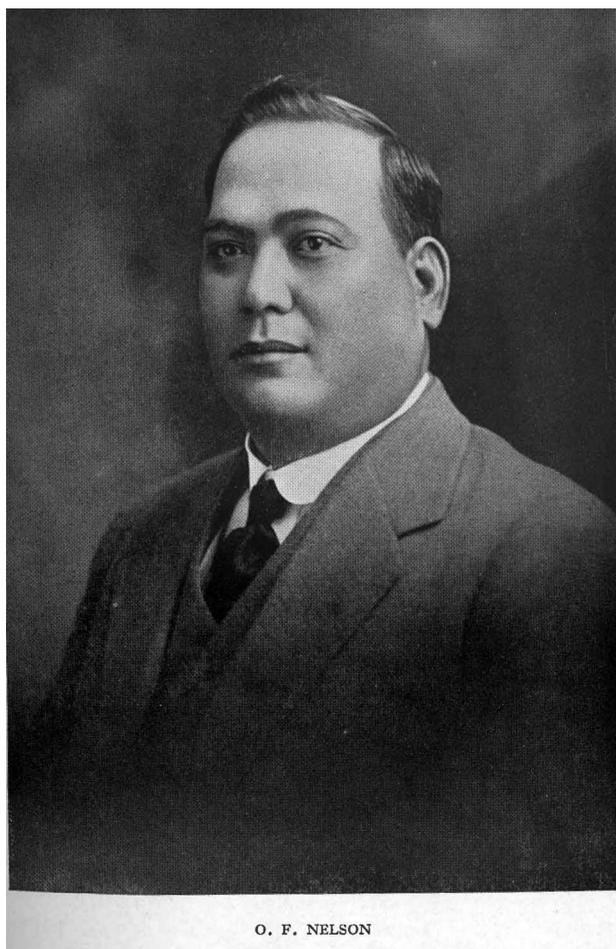


FIGURE 4: Ta'isi O.F. Nelson, portrait reproduced in N.A. Rowe, *Samoa under the Sailing Gods* (London 1930), facing 208.

success in his family's business, which he joined at age 17, around 1901. Ta'isi became Samoa's richest businessman after New Zealand's takeover of Samoa in 1914 by filling the vacuum left by the swift confiscation of German assets, profiting from wartime economics and building on his family company's stake in trading stores around the islands. This pre-eminent position would be further consolidated in 1923, when Ta'isi was left the considerable business interests of his American father-in-law, Harry J. Moors.<sup>25</sup>

In studies of the Mau, the movement that arose in protest against the New Zealand administration, Ta'isi, as a central figure of Samoan society and a Mau leader, appears in varying detail.<sup>26</sup> Maui Pomare was also a central figure in Mau history, but few historians have even mentioned Pomare's connection to the Samoan cause – a connection that this study illuminates for the first time.<sup>27</sup> The absence of Pomare from Mau history corresponds to the limited historical attention he has received overall, despite being a leading figure in his time.<sup>28</sup> Studying the friendship between Sir Maui and Ta'isi sheds new and vital light on these two men. This inquiry also expands the wider story of New Zealand's relations with Indigenous peoples within and beyond its shores. It is the first to use correspondence between Sir

<sup>25</sup> See Hugh Laracy, 'Nelson, Olaf Frederick – biography', Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4n5/nelson-olaf-frederick> (accessed 31 Oct. 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Historians have used a plethora of published and archival sources to support their various portrayals of Ta'isi. The most used sources reside in Archives New Zealand. The following historians of Samoa have all contributed to the extant historical knowledge of Ta'isi O.F. Nelson: Albert Wendt, '“Guardians and wards”: a study of the origins, causes, and the first two years of the Mau in Western Samoa', MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington (Wellington 1965); J.W. Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa: the emergence of the independent state of Western Samoa* (Oxford 1967); Mary Boyd, 'The record in Western Samoa to 1945', in Ross, *New Zealand's Record*, 115–88; Michael J. Field, *Mau: Samoa's struggle for freedom* (Auckland 1984); Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*; Ian Campbell 'New Zealand and the Mau in Samoa: re-assessing the causes of a colonial protest movement', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 33:1 (1999), 92–110.

<sup>27</sup> Davidson made a fleeting reference to Maui Pomari. Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, 132, fn. Eteuati noted that 'Maui Pomare ... was a personal friend of Nelson's'. Kilifoti Sisilia Eteuati, 'Evaevaga a Samoa: assertion of Samoan autonomy 1920–1936', PhD thesis, Australian National University (Canberra 1982), 81. Field also made brief mentions of Sir Maui, noting that he attended the 1926 meeting with Coates and Nosworthy, visited Tupua Tamasese Lealofi in jail and was sickened by the news of the Black Saturday massacre. Field, *Mau*, 71, 132, 160.

<sup>28</sup> This lack of attention is largely due to the paucity of available sources. In his biography, Cody used newspaper articles and parliamentary papers, though his book contains few citations. J.F. Cody, *Man of Two Worlds: Sir Maui Pomare* (Wellington 1953). Works by Michael King and Dick Scott include some biographical information on Pomare and rely on government reports, newspapers, the writings of contemporaries and Cody to support their assertions. King, *Te Puea*; Dick Scott, *Ask That Mountain: the story of Parihaka* (Rosedale 2008). Butterworth has also noted the existence of papers held by the Pomare *whanau* (family). Graham Butterworth, 'Pomare, Maui Wiremu Piti Naera – biography', Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/3p30/pomare-maui-wiremu-piti-naera> (accessed 8 June 2012).

Maui and Ta'isi held in the Ta'isi papers at Tuaefu (Ta'isi's Apia mansion). In addition to other sources, these letters illuminate previously unknown dimensions of these men, the powerful historical and cultural connections they forged and the direct links they established between the Samoan Mau and the highest political officials in New Zealand.<sup>29</sup>

Maui Pomare and Ta'isi met in mid-1919 in Apia when Dr Pomare accompanied Governor General Lord Liverpool on an island tour. While in Samoa, Dr Pomare inquired into New Zealand governance, gathering proposals for the transition to a civilian government. These inquiries brought him into contact with Ta'isi, who was Apia's leading citizen at the time.<sup>30</sup> The oldest letter from Ta'isi to Dr Pomare dates from August 1919. It begins, 'Sir, in our recent conversation about the future administration of Samoa you requested me to write you my views on the matter. They are briefly as follows'. Ta'isi outlined native affairs, especially the need to transform the current 'House of Faipule' into a parliament of elected members and the need to appoint two high chiefs from the Malietoa and Tupua families to salaried and prestigious advisory positions. Because Samoa's European population was concentrated in Apia, he also stressed the need to create a municipality of Apia and a council to rule over it. In addition he advocated for the administrator to possess powers to mediate in Samoan affairs in ways Ta'isi would later refine and then repudiate.<sup>31</sup> In a second formal letter, Ta'isi advised Dr Pomare that the way in which European and Samoan status was being determined (and which followed German precedent) should be continued.<sup>32</sup> European status could be attained by Samoans if they had a European parent (almost always a father) and a European education, but they would then forfeit rights to lands and titles, though Ta'isi noted that 'very few, if any, Natives have availed themselves of the privileges'.<sup>33</sup> From this very distant and business-like beginning, a deep friendship would

<sup>29</sup> Only Kilifoti Eteuati has had previous access to Ta'isi's papers held at Tuaefu. Of these Tuaefu papers, he only cited letters exchanged between Ta'isi and Harry Holland that were microfilmed (along with correspondence between Ta'isi and Rosabel Nelson) by the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (hereinafter PMB) and which now comprise PMB microfilm 712. Eteuati also acknowledged the assistance of Ta'isi's daughters, Sina Annandale and Piliopo Retzlaff, in addition to Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, the well-known statesman and Pacific scholar, who has also assisted other historians in addition to this author, most notably J.W. Davidson, Michael Field and Damon Salesa. See Eteuati, 'Evaevaga a Samoa', vii; 83, note 11; 276, note 4; 294, notes 31–33.

<sup>30</sup> Administration of Samoa information gained by Doctor Pomare 1915–1921, ANZ IT1 25 EX 1/12.

<sup>31</sup> O.F. Nelson to Dr Maui Pomare, 13 Aug. 1919, ANZ IT441 EX 79/2/1 part 1.

<sup>32</sup> On German racial categorisations see Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 115–17; Evelyn Wareham, *Race and Realpolitik: the politics of colonisation in German Samoa* (Frankfurt: 2002), ch. 5.

<sup>33</sup> O.F. Nelson to Dr Maui Pomare, 27 Aug. 1919, ANZ IT441 EX 79/2/1 part 1. When the 1920 New Zealand parliamentary delegation to Pacific Islands visited Samoa, Ta'isi was the chairman of the Apia-based Citizen's Committee that presented a 12-page report to the delegation that both endorsed and challenged aspects of New Zealand's rule to date. See *Visit of Parliamentary Party to Pacific Islands, February–March 1920* (Wellington 1920), 1–74, <http://atojs.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/atojs?a=d&d=AJHR1920-I.2.1.2.6&e=-----1...1-----0--> (accessed 1 Aug. 2012).

develop. Ironically it grew as Ta'isi became increasingly disaffected with New Zealand's rule and was targeted by New Zealand as 'the cause of all the trouble' with Samoa.<sup>34</sup>

Ta'isi had unique insights into Samoan society owing to his Samoan and European heritage. He was one of the 'very few' Samoans who had opted to take up European status. Because of his father's nationality (August Nelson was born in Sweden), Ta'isi was eligible to register as a European. He already held the *matai* title of Toleafoa from Lefagaoali'i in Samauga, Savai'i. From 1923 he bore the *ali'i* (chiefly) title of Ta'isi, bestowed by the village of Asau.<sup>35</sup> It was through the distinguished lineage of Ta'isi's mother, Sinagogo Masoe, connecting her to several Savai'i villages, that her eldest son was bestowed with both the Toleafoa and then the consequential Ta'isi titles.<sup>36</sup> For Ta'isi his extended *āiga* (family) was almost exclusively Samoan, though his three sisters – Josephine, Gustava and Lucy – married Germans, a circumstance that New Zealand authorities thought compromised Ta'isi's pledge of loyalty to the British Empire.<sup>37</sup> Ta'isi's connections with his Samoan family and Samoan culture were powerful and inextricably connected with his everyday world and his sense of self. His *matai* titles reflect his standing in *fa'asamoa* (Samoan culture and customs). For Ta'isi, his bicultural heritage was not contradictory. For Pākehā New Zealander administrators and governments this was perplexing: they were unable to fit him into their inadequate racial constructions where European heritage supposedly 'cancelled out' Indigenous cultural connections, and they viewed his Samoan status with a dubious and cynical eye.

Ta'isi began to question the inadequacies of the racial register from around 1922. Not only did it not fit the bicultural realities of his life, but it no doubt did not fit others. His changed stance was also a reaction to increasingly restrictive racial definitions as the New Zealand administration attempted to counter growing Samoan discontent by disentangling and dividing the European and Samoan communities from each other.<sup>38</sup> Ta'isi maintained that despite his 'European status', he was 'Samoan by birth, blood and sentiment'.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> G.S. Richardson to M.E.J. Cocks, 21 Aug. 1927, Sydney, Mitchell Library, MS 763.

<sup>35</sup> The current holder of the Ta'isi title, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, believes 1923 was the year the title was conferred. Pers. comm., 9 and 25 Apr. 2013. The *pepa saofa'i* (certificate of *matai* title) that would confirm this date could not be located in the Lands and Titles Court archives, Apia. Regarding the Toleafoa title, see Alesoni to Mr Harrison, 2 Feb. 1921, Vaisala, Savai'i, High Court of Western Samoa, Lands and Titles Case – Savai'i file no. B/S 317/19.

<sup>36</sup> Jim Davidson described the Ta'isi title as having 'fallen into obscurity', with O.F. Nelson restoring it to a title of 'distinction'; see Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, 115. This characterisation of the Ta'isi title as having fallen into obscurity is disputed by the current holder of it. Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, pers. comm., 11 June 2012. Malama Meleisea supports this view, describing the Ta'isi title as 'the important *ali'i* title'. Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 139.

<sup>37</sup> See Governor General Charles Fergusson to L.C.M.S. Amery, secretary of state for dominion affairs, 16 July 1927, ANZ G48 35 s/31(1), p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 115–17; Toocolesulusulu D. Salesa, 'Half-castes between the wars: colonial categories in New Zealand and Samoa', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 34:1 (2000), 98–116.

<sup>39</sup> O.F. Nelson to Prime Minister Massey, 8 Jan. 1921, ANZ IT1 EX79/2/1, p. 1.

For Ta'isi as well as for Maui Pomare, their two heritages could and did coexist. Ta'isi would write of Sir Maui that 'Pomare was as British as any Maori could be', but this did not preclude him from working consistently for the restoration of Māori rights. Ta'isi described Sir Maui's attitude as 'be British, but be Maori first'.<sup>40</sup> Dr Pomare's loyalty to Britain was rewarded with British imperial honours (his 'titles') in the form of a CMG (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in 1920 and a KBE (Knight Commander of Order of the British Empire) in 1922. Ta'isi gained British imprimatur of a different nature in 1924 when he was granted the British citizenship he had been seeking since 1915. Ta'isi's quest for British citizenship was intended, he argued, to ease complications he encountered when he travelled internationally without British subject status or a British passport.<sup>41</sup>

Both Ta'isi and Sir Maui were deeply enamoured of European ways and traditions, and both were 'go-betweens' in their countries between Indigenous peoples and Papālagi or Pākehā respectively. Both were, and remain, controversial. For Sir Maui tensions revolve around his role in crafting the 1907 Tohunga Suppression Act, intent on outlawing traditional Māori medical practices in favour of Western ones. Also his wartime campaign to extend conscription to Māori set many contemporaries against him and called his loyalties to his people into question, though he would later express regret for the conscription campaign.<sup>42</sup> The controversies around Ta'isi arise from questions about his role and motives in the Mau. New Zealand officials and Samoans who sided with the New Zealand administration accused him of instigating the movement for his own political and financial ends. But he did not gain political power and dissipated a considerable portion of his wealth on the cause. Albert Wendt suggested that Ta'isi spent some £200,000 of his own money on the movement (about NZ\$21 million in today's terms) and rejected the interpretation of Ta'isi as New Zealand's 'arch enemy', manipulating Mau supporters for his own advantage.<sup>43</sup>

While much drew these men together, their most powerful connection was their mutual passion for Polynesian culture and history. Ta'isi's 400-volume library was filled with Pacific works from explorers' journals, travel accounts and ethnographies along with a wide range of other nonfiction works and also fiction.<sup>44</sup> In November 1923 Ta'isi presented a lecture to the Samoan Research Society on 'Legends of Samoa', which was later published with prominent anthropologist Johannes C. Andersen in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*.<sup>45</sup> Sir Maui too had a personal fascination with Polynesian myths, collating them over many years. His work culminated

<sup>40</sup> N.Z. *Samoa Guardian*, 3 July 1930, 2.

<sup>41</sup> O.F. Nelson to Prime Minister Massey, 8 Jan. 1921, 6.

<sup>42</sup> King, *Te Puea*, 137.

<sup>43</sup> Wendt, "Guardians and wards", 102–03. R.W. Tate quoted in Mary Boyd, 'Racial attitudes of New Zealand officials in Western Samoa', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 21:1 (1987), 151. Monetary figures calculated through the New Zealand Reserve Bank's inflation calculator, <http://www.rbnz.govt.nz/statistics/0135595.html> (accessed 24 July 2012).

<sup>44</sup> Ta'isi's Tuafu library was catalogued by the author and Tiffany Nelson in 2012.

<sup>45</sup> O.F. Nelson and Johannes C. Andersen, 'Legends of Samoa', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 34:134 (1925), 124–45.

in the second volume of *Legends of the Maori*, published in 1934.<sup>46</sup> Sir Maui's keen interest in Polynesian myth and his Auckland-based scholarship on it would have made him aware of Ta'isi's 1923 lecture. It is possible that both men met again in Polynesian ethnographic circles and exchanged views on this subject at this time, though no known written evidence of these exchanges exists.<sup>47</sup> Sir Maui's interest in Samoan dimensions to Māori legends was piqued in 1924 after he received from a Taranaki elder information he thought most exciting for its potential linkages of Māori and Samoan legend. Sir Maui mentioned this discovery to J.D. Gray, secretary of the Department of External Affairs, who in turn wrote to Governor Richardson that Sir Maui 'proposed to write to Mr O F Nelson on the subject' to ascertain whether Samoa had similar legends.<sup>48</sup> Presumably Sir Maui did write to Ta'isi at this point, and they began (or continued) their exchange of information about Māori and Samoan legends.

By 1924 Ta'isi's social standing was formalised into a political role in the Mandate when he took his place as the first member among the three elected members (meaning he got the most votes) of the legislative council of Samoa. Since 1919 he had been advocating for a council of three elected European members and three appointed by the administrator.<sup>49</sup> Administrator Tate had asked Ta'isi to join the legislative council in 1919, but the latter refused as he did not want to be a government-appointed representative and he was also about to embark on a long trip to the US and Europe.<sup>50</sup> By 1924 the amended Samoa Act allowed for the election of three 'European' members who would sit with not three but six appointed by General Richardson, who always voted as one bloc.<sup>51</sup> Though Ta'isi initially worked with Richardson, he became increasingly disaffected by the administration's financial management, which he saw as extravagant and burdening Samoans with debt. Ta'isi was also angered by Richardson's interference in native affairs – against his explicit advice – especially regarding the use of banishment as a punishment and the stripping of chiefly titles. Banishment had been used before by New Zealand following the lead of Germany described earlier, but Richardson used it to excess.<sup>52</sup> Ta'isi notified Richardson that the *faipule* he appointed were abusing banishment powers as a means to settle age-old scores.

<sup>46</sup> Sir Maui Pomare, *Legends of the Maori*, vol. 2: *Maori–Polynesian Historical Traditions, Folk-lore, and Stories of Old New Zealand*, ed. James Cowan (Wellington 1934). James Cowan wrote the first volume of *Legends of the Maori* (Wellington 1930).

<sup>47</sup> Sir Maui was supposed to visit Apia in 1923 on government business, but this potential encounter with Ta'isi in Apia appears not to have taken place. See letters between Gray and Richardson relating to this proposed trip in ANZ IT1 445 EX79/78.

<sup>48</sup> J.D. Gray to G.S. Richardson, 5 Aug. 1924, ANZ IT1 445 EX79/78.

<sup>49</sup> O.F. Nelson to Dr Maui Pomare, 13 Aug. 1919, ANZ IT1 441 EX79/2/1 part 1.

<sup>50</sup> O.F. Nelson's evidence before the Royal Commission into the administration of Western Samoa, 1927, Wellington, Alexander Turnbull Library, MS 1520: 159–65, Bell Family Papers, p. 52.

<sup>51</sup> See Legislative Council minutes, 1925, ANZ IT1, EX 1/8/1 part 2.

<sup>52</sup> Boyd, 'The record in Western Samoa', 145, 152; Hemenstall and Rutherford, *Protest and Dissent*, 35.

The political impotence of Samoans to influence this course of events fuelled their growing discontent, which was becoming very apparent by 1926. Ta'isi's deepened understanding, gained through his friendship with Pomare, about how Māori fitted into the New Zealand political system made him question why circumstances were so patently different in Samoa. He questioned the separate political arrangements for Samoan 'natives' and *afakasi*-designated Europeans (those with mixed Samoan and European parentage), which did not exist in New Zealand for Māori. The terms of the Mandate did not preclude New Zealand from mirroring its own political arrangements in Samoa. In fact New Zealand was given 'full power of administration and legislation' over Samoa and could 'apply the laws of the Dominion of New Zealand to the territory, subject to ... local modifications'.<sup>53</sup>

While visiting Wellington in early September 1926, Ta'isi met with Prime Minister Coates and Minister for External Affairs William Nosworthy. Also in attendance at the meeting was Maui Pomare. Though this meeting had been strongly encouraged by Richardson, Ta'isi used it to inform the prime minister of the growing discontent in Samoa. So fragile was the situation Ta'isi portrayed that Nosworthy agreed to visit Samoa immediately to investigate. Ta'isi took this ministerial commitment as the pretext to instigate two public meetings in Apia for October and November as a way of preparing for the ministerial visit, which was subsequently cancelled at Richardson's behest. At these meetings Samoans and Europeans voiced their dissent against New Zealand and Richardson in particular. Richardson had the second meeting stopped on the grounds that he strongly disapproved of 'European and Samoan citizens meeting together to discuss public affairs of common interest'.<sup>54</sup> This was a catalytic moment for Ta'isi. He well knew that Māori of mixed parentage were not precluded from politically associating with and representing Māori, so he asked why it was different in Samoa? For instance, Maui Pomare's mother, Mere Hautonga Nicoll, was the daughter of Kahe Te Rau-o-te-rangi and immigrant John Nicoll,<sup>55</sup> thereby making Pomare a product of racial mixing, yet this did not affect his ability to assume one of the four Māori parliamentary seats and be accepted wholeheartedly by his Pākehā parliamentary colleagues as a legitimate representative of Māori.<sup>56</sup> For Ta'isi, New Zealand's action of stopping the political association of the racially intertwined Samoan community violated his very sense of self.

By March 1927 Ta'isi and many other Samoans and Europeans had formed the Mau as a political organisation with two components: the European 'Citizen's Committee', led by Ta'isi, and the Samoan 'Samoa Defence League'. Ta'isi pragmatically argued to the administration that the racially divided components of the movement did not associate with each other and therefore did not violate Richardson's direction that 'Europeans' and Samoans were not to associate politically. In reality

<sup>53</sup> Great Britain Foreign Office, *Mandate for German Samoa* (London 1921), art. 2. This language was replicated in the New Zealand parliament's Samoa Act of 1921. See preamble, p. 45.

<sup>54</sup> Nelson, *The Truth About Samoa*, 15.

<sup>55</sup> John's surname is sometimes spelt 'Nicholl', while Mere Nicoll is also known as Mary Nichols.

<sup>56</sup> O.F. Nelson to Sir Maui Pomare, 17 Dec. 1926, Apia, Tuaeufu, Personal Papers of Ta'isi O.F. Nelson [hereinafter OFN] 58. Cody, *Man of Two Worlds*, 13; Butterworth, 'Pomare', 1.

the two components of the movement reflected the racial entanglement of Samoan society. The Mau was determined to force changes in New Zealand's administration through civil disobedience, creating economic disarray by not paying taxes, boycotting businesses and disrupting the plantation economy.<sup>57</sup> They also conducted an international campaign of petitions, litigation and publicity that exposed New Zealand's administration in the League of Nations, in courts and in the media across the world.<sup>58</sup> The Mau's non-violent tactics may be seen as having derived from Mohandas Gandhi's tactics in British India, which were publicised to Samoans – along with other international 'Mau movements' within the British Empire and beyond it – via publications such as Ta'isi's newspaper, the *Samoa Guardian*, which was banned in Samoa but re-established in New Zealand in 1928 and renamed the *N.Z. Samoa Guardian*.<sup>59</sup>

Ta'isi's friendship with Sir Maui Pomare, however, situates the Mau within a longer history of struggle against the British Empire and their New Zealand-based agents, linking the Mau movement directly with the passive resistance community of Parihaka in Taranaki. Sir Maui's parents had been followers of Parihaka's prophets, Tohu Kākahi and Te Whiti-o-Rongomai. Te Whiti, in particular, is credited with developing a bloodless form of resistance derived from Christian principles that he described as 'a fighting peace'.<sup>60</sup> As a five-year-old boy, Sir Maui witnessed the infamous invasion of the community by New Zealand armed forces intent on ending the Parihaka community's disruption of encroaching farms. Lands confiscated from Māori had become Pākehā-owned farms, with invaluable government assistance through legislation and such force as exemplified by the Parihaka invasion.<sup>61</sup> Legend has it that the horse ridden by John Bryce, the leader of the military expedition, trampled Sir Maui's foot during the pandemonium of the morning of 5 November 1881, severing one of his toes.<sup>62</sup> Once the community had been overrun, Tohu and Te Whiti were arrested and exiled to the South Island to serve out their sentences.

<sup>57</sup> Field, *Mau*, chs 7 and 8; Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 135–36.

<sup>58</sup> Susan Pedersen, 'Samoa on the world stage: petitions and peoples before the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40:2 (2012), 231–61.

<sup>59</sup> The *N.Z. Samoa Guardian* regularly covered nationalist movements and struggles from Iraq, Palestine, the Dutch East Indies, New Guinea, the Balkans, Egypt, China, South West Africa and Ireland. The paper stated 'these Mau movements are signs of the times'. *N.Z. Samoa Guardian*, 28 Nov. 1929. India was given particular prominence, evidenced in the long coverage of Indian history, meetings held in 1932 between the British government and Gandhi and the statement 'we shall not again explain the Mau of India as it is already well known to those who read this paper'. *N.Z. Samoa Guardian*, 7 July 1932.

<sup>60</sup> Hazel Riseborough, 'A new kind of resistance: Parihaka and the struggle for peace', in Kelvin Day (ed.), *Contested Ground = Te Whenua i Tohea: The Taranaki Wars, 1860–1881* (Wellington 2010), 231.

<sup>61</sup> For an account of the Parihaka invasion in 1881, see Hazel Riseborough, *Days of Darkness: Taranaki, 1878–1884* (Wellington 1989), ch. 6.

<sup>62</sup> James Cowan, 'Preface', in Pomare, *Legends of the Maori*, x; Cody, *Man of Two Worlds*, 19; James Belich, *I Shall Not Die: Titokowaru's War, New Zealand, 1868–9* (Wellington 1989), 285. Dick Scott casts doubt on this story. See Scott, *Ask That Mountain*, 199; Rachel Buchanan, *The Parihaka Album: lest we forget* (Wellington 2009), 145–51.

The Samoan Mau was not an unprecedented turn in New Zealand's history as many histories on this subject imply.<sup>63</sup> Studying the relationship between Sir Maui and Ta'isi shows the exchanges that took place between them about Parihaka history and the ideas of Te Whiti, in particular. Ta'isi, for instance, asked Sir Maui about Māori-Pākehā history in what appears to have been part of an ongoing conversation between the two. Ta'isi also used the expression 'Te Whitis [sic] of Samoa' in 1929 to describe the then exiled and imprisoned Mau leader Tamasese Lealofi, showing his knowledge of this Māori history and making an explicit connection to what was taking place in Samoa.<sup>64</sup> Tohu and Te Whiti adopted a non-violent strategy after military campaigns in Taranaki had ravaged the region over three decades. In the Samoan context, the civil wars of the 1880s showed the extraordinary price and futility of warfare to effect a lasting and satisfactory outcome. World War I provided similar lessons while reinforcing the vast military superiority of the British Empire relative to Samoa. So adopting a non-violent strategy was pragmatic, as the Mau assumed that New Zealand would not use violence against it. Yet the New Zealand government deployed similar strategies for dealing with the Samoan non-violent resistance movement as it had with Parihaka, most notably in the exile of leaders and military confrontations. In the Samoan case, these actions culminated in the Black Saturday massacre of 28 December 1929.<sup>65</sup>

As the leader of the Mau and, in the view of Governor Richardson, the sole instigator of the whole trouble, Ta'isi was targeted for exile in 1927. Before this could happen, the Samoa Act had to be amended, spurring passionate debates in the New Zealand parliament. Sir Maui made his astounding speeches attacking his own government on 26 July 1927. He evoked Māori and Samoan kinship and reminded the house that Samoans had been given no choice in becoming part of the British Empire. Though he did not cite Te Whiti, Sir Maui reminded the house of New Zealand's history of banishing Māori leaders without trial as well as the violent outcomes that followed the mistreatment of leaders. He even went head-to-head with Prime Minister Coates over the impact of the influenza epidemic. The *Auckland Star* reported that Maui Pomare's speech was so 'sensational' that it 'thrilled the house'.<sup>66</sup> Other politicians realised that the course the New Zealand government was taking in amending the Samoa Act, making exile and other draconian measures legal options, was New Zealand history repeating itself. They cautioned the government, but it did not take heed.<sup>67</sup> Leader of the opposition, Harry Holland, was however an unstinting supporter of the Samoan cause and a correspondent with Ta'isi from 1928

<sup>63</sup> By discussing Pākehā-Māori history and Pākehā-Samoan history in parallel, Hempenstall and Rutherford came closest to making the point that the Mau had a New Zealand precedent. Hempenstall and Rutherford, *Protest and Dissent*, 35–43, 94.

<sup>64</sup> O.F. Nelson to Sir Maui Pomare, 17 Dec. 1927, OFN 58; O.F. Nelson report, 26 Apr. 1929, ANZ IT1 37 EX 1/23/8 part 20. James Cowan, 'Samoan and Maori: Te Whiti's fight in Taranaki', *N.Z. Samoa Guardian*, 4 Sep. 1930.

<sup>65</sup> Michael Field, *Black Saturday: New Zealand's tragic blunders in Samoa* (Auckland 2006).

<sup>66</sup> Maui Pomare, 27 July 1927, *NZPD*, vol. 212 (Wellington 1927), 928–31. (The exchange with Coates on influenza appears on p. 929.) *Auckland Star*, 27 July 1927, 11.

<sup>67</sup> D. Jones, William Lysnar, Edwin Howard, Peter Fraser and Maui Pomare all referred to Māori historical precedents. *NZPD*, vol. 212, 893, 897, 676–77, 678, 686, 928.

to 1932. Holland promised that if Labour were elected, 'Samoans would be able to run the country under the British flag' and also cautioned parliament during the impassioned 1927 debates about the Samoa Act that Ngāti Porou leader 'Te Kooti was deported and trouble followed' – a prescient observation.<sup>68</sup>

While parliament debated both the amendment and the upcoming royal commission on Samoan administration, Ta'isi sent Sir Maui a letter showing how close the two men had become. He wrote:

My Dear Pomare, Often did I want to rush up to your Ministry Room for a chat but knowing how busy you were with the Parliament in Session I refrained from doing so. Then again, knowing your sentiments towards your Samoan Cousins in our hour of trial and the wrong impression which may be created on your own position in the Cabinet by my hanging around you, I thought it better to keep away until you needed me or required any information.<sup>69</sup>

Later, Sir Maui berated Ta'isi for breaching Polynesian etiquette and not calling on him despite Ta'isi's explanation for keeping his distance: 'Ta'isi ... do you really think that I would prostitute my honour or forfeit the heritage of our people for a seat in Cabinet or a portfolio in a pakeha government? ... it is yet my sincere hope in life', he continued, 'to maintain and restore to my Polynesian kinsmen' what has been lost for all time to Māori, governing themselves in 'Maoriland'.<sup>70</sup>

Despite Pomare's efforts and those of Labour MPs, the government prevailed in exiling Ta'isi along with two non-*afakasi* Europeans: Edwin William Gurr and Alfred George Smyth. Ordered to depart Samoa, Ta'isi left in January 1928 and took up residence in Auckland with his six daughters. He took his fight in mid-1928 to the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission and also the privy council. Both actions were unsuccessful in altering New Zealand's colonial strategies or revoking his exile, which would ultimately last over six years on this first occasion.

It was not long after the heated debates on amending the Samoa Act that the vessel *Maui Pomare* entered this history. In one of many ironies, this ship, which was supposed to evoke a progressive reconnection of Polynesian peoples under New Zealand's 'guardianship', instead quickly became a metaphor for the dysfunction of New Zealand's Samoan administration. That the Irish shipbuilders' work left a lot to be desired soon became apparent. At trial runs in British ports, the vessel's holds were discovered to leak when cargo was loaded. On arriving in Apia in April 1928, the *Maui Pomare* developed engine trouble, a recurring problem that caused great inconvenience and expense. Though purpose-built for transporting fruit, by August 1928 the holds were known to get so hot that fruit spoiled; thousands of boxes of

<sup>68</sup> Harry Holland, 22 July 1927, and D. Jones, 26 July 1927, *ibid.*, 893; Hempenstall and Rutherford, *Protest and Dissent*, 40. See H.E. Holland, *Samoa: a story that teems with tragedy* (Wellington 1918); H.E. Holland, *Revolt of the Samoans* (Wellington 1928); correspondence between Ta'isi and Holland between 1928 and 1932, Canberra, PMB 712.

<sup>69</sup> O.F. Nelson to Sir Maui Pomare, 8 Aug. 1927, ANZ AAAR W3558 1452 exhibit 66.

<sup>70</sup> N.Z. *Samoa Guardian*, 3 July 1930, 2.

bananas had to be jettisoned into the Pacific.<sup>71</sup> From the outset, paying passengers also complained. The steps inside the vessel were so steep that one passenger tumbled to the bottom and suffered serious bruising and concussion, and that was in mild seas. More alarmingly, the decks had no handrails, so passengers had only door handles to cling onto. The ship had bathrooms for passengers, but these were not connected to a water supply.<sup>72</sup> The *Maui Pomare*, in short, quickly became a cruel Irish joke.

The contrast between the ill-fated ship and its namesake was not lost when an inquiry was held into the ship's flaws in mid-1929.<sup>73</sup> The *Maui Pomare* only highlighted the vast contrast between, on the one hand, the vessel and the colonial administration it represented and, on the other, the courageous stance by the ship's namesake against New Zealand's tough rule of Samoa. The flurry of bad publicity about the vessel in mid-1929 coincided with Sir Maui's visit to exiled and imprisoned Mau leader Tupua Tamasese Lealofi, in Auckland's Mt Eden Prison in May 1929. Sir Maui wrote an account of the meeting, saying he reminded his 'Brother', Tamasese, what Sir Maui's famous forebear Te Whiti had said: 'the pen is mightier than the sword'. This statement juxtaposed the Mau's non-violent strategies against the militaristic ones of New Zealand.<sup>74</sup>

The *Maui Pomare's* situation could not have been more embarrassing and financially disastrous. The government looked for a buyer for the ship, though unsurprisingly without success. The new government under Prime Minister Ward, which replaced Coates's government in 1928, continued the previous government's harsh policies, prompting pro-Samoan media to advocate a name change for the 'unlucky' vessel. Names like 'Joe Ward' or 'My Dear General' were suggested (Figure 5).<sup>75</sup> The public also chimed in. One Katarina Peka waggishly suggested 'Rongo Iti' or 'Little Peace', referring to the tense state of New Zealand–Samoan relations.<sup>76</sup>

Ta'isi's enforced residence in New Zealand from 1928 had brought him even closer to Sir Maui and his family. Frequent visits to Lower Hutt or Waitara, where Pomare had homes, deepened the bonds connecting Ta'isi and his six daughters with Pomare, Miria Woodbine Pomare (Lady Pomare) and the three Pomare children. Now Ta'isi addressed Sir Maui in correspondence by the *matai* title

<sup>71</sup> 'Island trade: cost the state', *New Zealand Herald*, 11 Mar. 1929; 'Another cargo spoiled: cargo on Maui Pomare', *Dominion*, 11 Mar. 1929; 'Bad bananas dumped into sea 3000 cases jettisoned', *Star*, 18 Mar. 1929, ANZ IT 1 296 EX 40/8/5. See 'Enquiry and report by parliamentary committee into service in general June/December 1929', ANZ IT 1 297 EX 40/8/13.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Todd to Department of Cook Islands, 30 Aug. 1928, and S.J. Smith to Secretary of Cook Islands Department, 26 Sep. 1928, ANZ IT 1 296 EX 40/8/5.

<sup>73</sup> 'Island fruit trade: Maui Pomare troubles unsuited for service', *Dominion*, 18 July 1929; 'Enquiry and report by parliamentary committee into service in general June/December 1929'.

<sup>74</sup> N.Z. *Samoa Guardian*, 30 May 1929.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Katarina Peka to Prime Minister Ward, 10 June 1929, and Prime Minister to Katarina Peka, 15 June 1929, ANZ IT 1 296 EX 40/8/5.



FIGURE 5: 'Casting out the evil spirits from the "Maui Pomare": Sir Joseph (at the re-christening): "A lucky name means a lucky ship"', *N.Z. Samoa Guardian*, 30 May 1929, 3.

‘Galumalemana’, and Pomare signed his letters with this also. Pomare’s salutations to Ta‘isi became ‘My Dear Brother’. Their letters trace the deteriorating political situation and Sir Maui’s intervention behind closed doors, first with Prime Minister Coates, then Prime Minister Ward. Ward’s electoral success in December 1928 put Sir Maui in opposition but elevated Sir Apirana Ngata to the ministry. Sir Maui spoke to Sir Apirana of Samoa’s plight and related those conversations to Ta‘isi, telling him, ‘I know that you have a champion and a friend in Sir Apirana Ngata’.<sup>77</sup> Both men had high hopes that the new Ward government would provide opportunities for a solution. Ta‘isi wrote to Sir Maui in January 1929 that ‘the good work that you and Sir Apirana Ngata have put in with Sir Joseph Ward will pave the way for an amicable discussion that I trust will found the basis on which a better understanding can be reached’.<sup>78</sup> But as the discussions about the renaming of the *Maui Pomare* might suggest by analogy, these high hopes for change were quickly dashed.

From 1929 the letters also trace Sir Maui’s personal battle with tuberculosis. In July 1929 he explained his lack of correspondence, writing,

I am pleased to let you know that I have come back from walking in the valley of shadows ... I had a terrible hemorrhage, which nearly called for a full stop – however it was only a semi-colon so I am here in my bed wishing I was somewhere else.<sup>79</sup>

As 1929 progressed, both the situation in Samoa and Sir Maui’s health deteriorated. Lady Pomare wrote to Ta‘isi for her ailing husband in September, thanking him and ‘the members of the Mau’ for an array of Samoan curios that Ta‘isi had sent. She wrote:

Maui is touched deeply by the handsome gifts ... the kava bowl he has on the table in his bedroom – it is a beautiful thing – he has worn the ring and walking stick and tappa [sic] cloths are also in his bedroom.<sup>80</sup>

The terrible news of the massacre in Apia on 28 December 1929, which killed nine Samoans including Sir Maui’s friend Tupua Tamasese Lealofi, hit the ailing Sir Maui hard. He sent a telegram to Ta‘isi: ‘HEART BLEEDS FOR YOUR PEOPLE SICK UNTO DEATH I SENT TAMASESES WIDOW MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE NO NEED TO TELL YOU TO KEEP STEADFAST AND ABOVE ALL TO KEEP CALM AM WRITING AROHA GALUMALEMANA’.<sup>81</sup> Sir Maui was so devastated by this news that his health took a serious turn. Ta‘isi wrote to Lady Pomare a few days later, informing her of developments in Samoa, though he asked her to read out only the portions of the letter she thought appropriate so as

<sup>77</sup> Sir Maui Pomare to Ta‘isi O.F. Nelson, 10 Dec. 1928, OFN 58.

<sup>78</sup> Ta‘isi O.F. Nelson to Sir Maui Pomare, 31 Jan. 1929, OFN 58.

<sup>79</sup> Sir Maui Pomare to Ta‘isi O.F. Nelson, 3 July 1929, OFN 58.

<sup>80</sup> Lady Pomare to Ta‘isi O.F. Nelson, 30 Sep. 1929, OFN 58.

<sup>81</sup> Sir Maui Pomare to Ta‘isi O.F. Nelson, 8 Jan. 1930, OFN 58.

not to upset her husband further. Ta'isi also sent Sir Maui a Samoan Bible, which Lady Pomare told Ta'isi 'gave him great comfort last night in his very trying hours'.<sup>82</sup>

Sir Maui's health did not improve, and in an effort to find a remedy he travelled to California in May 1930. Crossing the Pacific, Sir Maui wrote his last letter to Ta'isi on 23 May. He said he did not expect miracles; 'still I am certain I am making progress'. Also he was anxious to let Ta'isi know, in confidence, of his last meeting with Gordon Coates just prior to his departure from New Zealand: 'I told him there was only one thing between him and myself and that was the Samoa Question'. He informed Ta'isi that Coates had promised him autonomy for Samoans in a limited number of years, repeal of the banishment orders and full representation of Samoans in a house of elected representatives. Sir Maui told Ta'isi, 'now draw your tigers off Coates because he is the coming man and if I live to come back to you I am certain what Gordon Coates has promised me will be faithfully carried out'.<sup>83</sup>

But Sir Maui did not come back to him. He died just over a month later in Los Angeles, eliciting great outpourings of grief and expressions of admiration for his work over his long period of public service. In the many expressions of condolence made in parliament, only Harry Holland recalled Sir Maui's stance on Samoa: 'those of us who listened to his speech on the third reading of the Samoa Amendment Bill in 1927 know that it was one the greatest efforts ever made in this House'.<sup>84</sup> But no one expressed sorrow and gratitude with more passion than Ta'isi. 'The clouds of heaven disperse', he wrote, 'the titles are scattered – there is death – the moon has fallen in the Council of Chiefs and Kings of Aotearoa. POMARE IS DEAD.' He wrote of the great personal loss as well as the loss to Samoa: 'Pomare you have left us, but on whom shall Samoa lean? Who shall be the fortress of our little country? You have been the main pillar of our faith', and he pledged that 'your name and your love for Samoa will never be forgotten'.<sup>85</sup>

Pomare's ashes were returned to New Zealand, via Rarotonga. As he had been the long-serving minister for the Cook Islands and was held in very high esteem, there he was afforded full honours. In New Zealand his *tangi* (funeral), held at the Owae Marae in Waitara on 25 August and paid for by the government, was an enormous affair attended by thousands, including many members of parliament and the judiciary.<sup>86</sup> Ta'isi had sent his cousin Tauvao Talese and two of his daughters,

<sup>82</sup> Ta'isi O.F. Nelson to Lady Pomare, 15 Jan. 1930, and Lady Pomare to Ta'isi O.F. Nelson, OFN 58.

<sup>83</sup> Sir Maui Pomare to Ta'isi O.F. Nelson, 23 May 1930, OFN 58. Coates's commitment to Sir Maui never came about. It seems to have been based on the expectation that the government would fall after Joseph Ward resigned the prime ministership on grounds of ill health on 28 May 1930. Ward died 8 July 1930. The government did not collapse and was led by George Forbes for another 15 months. Many thanks to Malcolm McKinnon for this insight. Pers. comm., 19 Sept. 2012.

<sup>84</sup> Harry Holland, 1 July 1930, *NZPD*, vol. 224 (Wellington 1930), 90.

<sup>85</sup> English translation of the Samoan language supplement, *N.Z. Samoa Guardian*, 3 July 1930, 5, ANZ IT 1 284 EX 37/12; Pomare, *Legends of the Maori*, 276.

<sup>86</sup> See numerous newspaper reports in ANZ MA1 1533 R22411749.

Viopapa and Piliopo, to represent him and Samoa. After the three had arrived in New Plymouth, Sir Maui's family insisted on Ta'isi's presence too, and he made a last-minute dash from Auckland along winding and rough roads, arriving the morning of commemorations.

Amidst Māori burial rites and before politicians who had both supported and persecuted Samoans, Ta'isi and his family stepped forward. Ta'isi made a 'speech according to Samoan custom' and then presented an '*ie tōga* or fine mat which 'was spread by Viopapa the elder daughter of Taisi on one side, by Piliopo on the other side and Tauvao at the rear all wearing lavalavas of siapo [mulberry barkcloth]'. Ta'isi explained that

this mat was one of the principal mats in the *lagi* (burial ceremony) of Tamasese, the father of the late Tamasese Lealofi and the present Tamasese. On that occasion this mat was presented to Mr Williams, the then Deputy Administrator of Savaii. From Mr Williams the mat passed to Petia LeSavaiinaea (Mr P A Jenson). It has now been released to be presented this day as a *mavaega* (parting gift) between Ta'isi and his dear friend Pomare.

He noted that this was the 'first time anything of this nature had been seen in this country', describing the intermingling of Māori and Samoan customs witnessed at Sir Maui's *tangi* as a 'reunion'.<sup>87</sup>

Without his powerful friend, Ta'isi found that his trials and those of Samoans continued. His five-year sentence of exile extended into six years as he delayed his return for fear of further bloodshed in Samoa. When he did return in 1933, within a matter of months he was put on trial and exiled again, now for ten years with an initial prison term. It was the *Maui Pomare* that transported him to Christchurch to serve his sentence in Paparua prison. Following the election of the Savage Labour government in 1935, Ta'isi's sentence was remitted, and he and his daughters made their journey back to Samoa, again on the *Maui Pomare*, at the government's expense.

Ta'isi's pledge that Sir Maui's name and love for Samoa would not be forgotten has been honoured.<sup>88</sup> Eighty-three years after Sir Maui's *tangi* at Owae Marae, Waitara, the Pomare and Ta'isi families met again on 29 June 2013. Led by Ta'isi's grandson and the Samoan head of state, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, along with other members of the Ta'isi *āiga*, local dignitaries and the Samoan community of Taranaki, the visitors were welcomed onto the historic *marae* (sacred space in front of a meeting house) by the *tangata whenua* (Indigenous people of the land) of Taranaki. The gathering was to mark Pomare Day, an annual event that

<sup>87</sup> English translations of *N.Z. Samoa Guardian*, 4 Sep. 1930, and *N.Z. Samoa Guardian*, 28 Aug. 1930, 5, ANZ IT1 284 EX 37/12.

<sup>88</sup> In his speech to the nation marking the 50th anniversary of Samoa's independence from New Zealand on 1 June 2012, the Samoan head of state remembered Sir Maui; the speech is reproduced in His Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, 'Preface', in Leasiolagi Malama Meleisea, Penelope Schoeffel Meleisea and Ellie Meleisea (eds), *Samoa's Journey 1962–2012: aspects of history* (Wellington 2012), 9–12.

recalls Sir Maui's contributions to New Zealand and, in particular, his promotion of the non-violent message of Parihaka. On this emotionally charged Pomare Day, the friendship between Sir Maui Pomare and Ta'isi, which had been hidden for over eight decades, was commemorated along with Sir Maui's devotion to the Samoan cause.<sup>89</sup> It was remembered that this friendship shaped the course of this history, *reuniting* Māori and Samoans through their Polynesian traditions and for the first time *uniting* them through strategies of contesting the violence of colonialism with non-violent resistance. This history, now coming back into light, illuminates Maui Pomare and Ta'isi O.F. Nelson as formative pan-Pacific leaders. These friends shaped the history that binds New Zealand with Samoa and were figures of international importance in the global story of anticolonial resistance between the wars.

<sup>89</sup> Lealaiauloto Fatu Tauafi, 'We are reminded of Sir Maui and Ta'isi', *Samoa Observer*, 7 July 2013, 6–7, 14–15, 28, 30. The author thanks the Tangata Whenua o Taranaki and the Pomare *whanau*, in particular Miria Pomare, for the immense honour of inviting me to also give an address on Pomare Day, 29 June 2013.