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Martyrs, Progress and Political Ambition

*Re-examining Rotuma's 'Religious Wars'**

ALAN HOWARD AND ERIC KJELLGREN

ON 19 JUNE 1879 THE ROTUMAN CHIEF MARAFU WROTE TO THE GOVERNOR OF FIJI requesting consideration for his petition that 'we [Rotuma and Fiji] should be under one Govt.'. The result was Rotuma's cession to Great Britain on 5 May 1881. The events leading to Maraf's¹ petition involved a tangled web of international politics, missionary agendas and the political ambitions of Rotuman chiefs. The most significant event immediately preceding Maraf's letter was a war between the predominantly Wesleyan districts of Itu'muta, Itu'ti'u, Malhaha, Oinafa and Noa'tau and the Catholic districts of Pepjei and Juju (collectively known as Fag'uta). To some people — those critical of missionary endeavours — the war was a flagrant example of Christian hypocrisy. There was plenty of evidence to construe the war as religiously motivated, fuelled by the blind zeal of missionaries competing for Rotuman souls.² The war of 1878 was the last of a series of skirmishes in which Christianity played a significant role in defining combatants. In 1871 a battle was fought on the isthmus of Motusa, in Itu'ti'u district, between Catholics and unconverted Rotumans on one side, Wesleyans on the other. For both wars we have multiple accounts — from a Rotuman chief actively engaged in both, from Catholic and Wesleyan missionaries, from sources informed by other participants or the descendants of participants. The differing accounts and their implications for Rotuman history are the focus of this essay.

Earlier wars, fought nearly two decades after the first Samoan missionaries were landed by John Williams in 1839, but several years before the establishment of the first white missionaries on the island, may also have had a religious component. In one instance, according to an account given by Chief Albert of Itu'ti'u to J. S. Gardiner in 1896, a battle was fought between the district of

* We would like to thank David Chappell, David Hanlon and the editors of this journal for reading an earlier draft of this paper and making useful comments. Jan Rensel has participated in every phase of the project, from locating sources to discussing interpretations and assisting in revisions. Her help has been invaluable.

¹ Although the full form of the title is Marafu, in actual usage the short form Maraf is generally used. Since most documentation uses the shortened form we will also. According to legend, the title Marafu derives from the Tongan chief Ma'afu who conquered Rotuma in the early 18th century. C. M. Churchward, 'Rotuman legends', *Oceania*, 8 (1937), 255–60.

² George Westbrook, who arrived on Rotuma in Nov. 1879 at the age of 20 to take charge of a trading station for Henderson & MacFarlane, attributed the onset of the war to a Wesleyan native teacher's taking pot-shots at Catholic crosses following an unsuccessful pig hunting expedition. He wrote that the war was 'fostered and condoned by pigheaded missionary fanaticism and hatred'. See Julian Dana, *Gods Who Die: The Story of Samoa's Greatest Adventurer* (New York 1935), 145–7.

Malhaha, which had converted to Wesleyanism, and Itu'ti'u, which remained unconverted. Albert reported that a visiting European vessel provided guns, other weapons and crew to assist Itu'ti'u, which won the encounter, and that the ship took away a number of Malhaha men as labourers.³ In another instance, according to an unnamed consultant to Fr Joseph Trouillet, Tokaniua, the chief of Oinafa, attempted to establish a Wesleyan *sau* to oppose the established *sau*, the main figure in the pre-missionary religion.⁴ Those supporting the traditional *sau* united under Riamkau, chief of Juju, invaded Oinafa, and won the ensuing battle, forcing the Wesleyans to abandon their project.

BY 1871 MOST of Rotuma had converted to Christianity, with the districts of Noa'tau, Oinafa, Malhaha and Itu'muta mostly Wesleyan, the districts of Juju and Pepjei mostly Catholic. In Itu'ti'u, however, the largest district, an enclave of unconverted Rotumans lived side by side with Wesleyans and Catholics. The chief of Itu'ti'u, Tauragtoak, was the only district chief who was not yet committed to Christianity. As the only remaining unconverted chief, Tauragtoak took responsibility for perpetuating the *sau*'s role, and accommodated a *sau* in the village of Savlei. When some Wesleyan sub-chiefs refused to donate provisions to support the *sau*, Tauragtoak declared that he would force them into submission. He asked support from Catholics in his district and received it, whereupon he prepared to press the issue. Thus, on the evening of 27 February 1871 Fr Joseph Trouillet baptised recently converted Catholics late into the night, sanctifying them for the expected battle.⁵ At nearby Motusa, Rotuman Wesleyans spent the night fortifying their houses and constructing a defensive wall of earth. The following morning, after mass, the combined Catholic and unconverted forces set out to engage the Wesleyans.⁶ Soon the Wesleyans were routed from their positions and fell back, but reinforcements sent from nearby districts turned the battle in favour of the Wesleyans, who forced Tauragtoak and his allies to flee to Fag'uta, which was under the Catholic chief Riamkau and the headquarters of the Catholic mission. In the aftermath a large number of 'heathens', along with some Catholics, converted to Wesleyanism, and Albert became chief of Itu'ti'u.⁷

³ J. Stanley Gardiner, 'Natives of Rotuma', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 27 (1898), 474.

⁴ For an account of *sau*ship in early Rotuma see Alan Howard, 'History, Myth and Polynesian Chieftainship: The Case of Rotuman Kings', in Antony Hooper and Judith Huntsman (eds), *Transformations of Polynesian Culture* (Auckland 1985); a theory of the origin of the institution can be found in Thegn Ladefoged, 'Evolutionary process in an Oceanic chieftdom: intergroup aggression and political integration in traditional Rotuman society', PhD thesis, University of Hawaii (Honolulu 1993).

⁵ Histoire de la Station Notre Dame de Victoires, Sumi, Rotuma 1868–1881, Notebook II, 2, Catholic Diocesan Office, Suva, Fiji (hereinafter 'Histoire Sumi') (Pacific Manuscript Bureau (PMB) Reel 159); translations from the French by Eric Kjellgren.

⁶ Trouillet to Poupinel, 10 Mar. 1871, Catholic Diocesan Office, Suva, Fiji (PMB Reel 428).

⁷ A narrative of these events by Litton Forbes, who visited Rotuma shortly afterwards, places responsibility for them largely in the hands of the missionaries. Forbes attributed the battle to the Protestant minister Osborne's advising his converts not to support the *sau*. See Litton Forbes, *Two Years in Fiji* (London 1875), 241.

By comparative standards this, and the war of 1878, were mere skirmishes. Even if the highest estimates of casualties are granted, considerably fewer than 100 were killed or wounded in each. If only reports of casualties on one's own side are considered the figures would range from 20 to 40 in each instance. Although some of the Wesleyans prepared to attack Fag'uta, the situation cooled as word came from several leading Wesleyan chiefs that they would not participate, provided all the Catholics at Itu'ti'u either converted to Protestantism or joined the exiles in Fag'uta.⁸

For months after the initial fighting an uneasy peace prevailed, punctuated by rumours that one side or the other was rearming. On 29 August 1871 a Russian corvette arrived bearing a letter from Bishop Elloy, announcing that a French warship was being sent to take charge of the situation and protect the interests of the Catholic missionaries who were French citizens.⁹ This news produced some consternation among the Protestants who had been sent by the Wesleyan Missionary Society and hence owed political allegiance to England. On 10 September the French warship *Hamelin* arrived bearing as one of its passengers Bishop Bataillon. Following a mass said by the Bishop at Fag'uta, Commander Poulthier of the *Hamelin* called a meeting of Rotuman chiefs. With some reluctance, the Wesleyan chiefs agreed to the meeting and gathered the next day at Motusa, along with the Commander and the two Catholic chiefs, Riamkau from Juju and Mora from Pepjei.¹⁰ At the end of the meeting Commander Poulthier, in the name of France, drew up an agreement, known as the Treaty of *Hamelin*, which was signed by the chiefs on both sides. Neither side would be punished for its actions during the war; henceforth Catholics were to be allowed free exercise of their religion, equal civil and political rights; and Catholics in exile could return to their houses and property unobstructed.¹¹

The situation began to deteriorate almost immediately after the *Hamelin's* departure. A few days later Albert wrote to Maraf announcing his refusal to accept Catholics back in Itu'ti'u, or to allow Catholic churches to be built in his district. In March 1872 Maraf, in direct defiance of the treaty, ordered his Catholic subjects either to convert or to join the exiles at Fag'uta.¹² On 25 July 1872 a second French warship, the *Vandreuil*, arrived to see if both parties were abiding by the terms of the treaty. Learning of the actions of Maraf and others, Commander Lefevre requested the Protestant chiefs to meet with him. They refused his first two invitations, but finally accepted after he sent a third, threatening, letter. In consequence of their violations of the *Hamelin* treaty, Lefevre

⁸ Trouillet to Poupinel, 10 Mar. 1871, Catholic Diocesan Office, Suva, Fiji (PMB Reel 428).

⁹ Histoire Sumi, 27 (PMB Reel 159).

¹⁰ Historique de la Station Notre Dame de Victoires, Sumi, Rotuma, Fiji, Catholic Diocesan Office, Suva, Fiji, 4 (hereinafter 'Historique') (PMB Reel 159); Histoire Sumi, 27–28 (PMB Reel 159); translations from the French by Eric Kjellgren.

¹¹ Roman Catholic Archives, Fiji (hereinafter RCAF), Rotuma History Document 1926 (RCAF 5/4/31/49), 9.

¹² RCAF 5/4/31/49, 9–10.

fined the Wesleyan chiefs 50 barrels of coconut oil, to be paid within six months if they wanted to avoid severe punishment from the next French warship that passed by.¹³ Maraf and the other Protestant chiefs steadfastly refused to pay the fines or abide by the treaty. They lodged a complaint against Commander Lefevre with the Governor of New Caledonia, and in August 1872 petitioned the British Government to annex Rotuma as a way of heading off French interference. Britain was then considering the annexation of Fiji (which was ceded in 1874, but did not include Rotuma).¹⁴

In 1872 there was movement on both sides toward reconciliation, or at least repatriation of the ousted Catholics. Trouillet wrote to the Wesleyan chiefs asking that Catholics be permitted to return to their homes; that their property and homes be restored; that they be permitted to build churches and have catechists; that the chiefs stop forcing their conversion to Wesleyanism; and that Wesleyans be allowed to convert to Catholicism if they wished.¹⁵ Apparently Albert and Manava, the chief of Itu'muta, finding the absence of so many of their subjects 'damaging to their material interests', seriously considered allowing the Catholics to return. They evidently sought and received the approval of the Wesleyan missionary John Osborne.¹⁶ Throughout 1872 there followed a heated exchange of letters between Maraf/Osborne and Riamkau/Trouillet, with the former demanding that the exiled Catholics return home unconditionally while the latter held out for assurances that Catholics would be given their rights under the terms of the treaty.¹⁷

The tension between the two sides abated considerably in 1873 when Osborne's tour of duty ended and he was replaced by the Rev. William Fletcher, who had previously served as the first European Wesleyan missionary on Rotuma from 1865 until relieved by Osborne in 1870. By all accounts Fletcher was far less belligerently anti-Catholic than his colleague and was displeased with what had happened in his absence. Fletcher went so far as to write to the Wesleyan Missionary Secretary asking that Osborne not be allowed to serve again on Rotuma.¹⁸ Throughout the mid-1870s relative peace prevailed, although the situation was little changed. Severe hurricanes struck the island in 1873 and 1874 and repairing damage kept both sides from renewing their quarrel. The 1874 hurricane leveled the Catholic church at Sumi, leading to a rift between Riamkau and the Catholic missionaries, who insisted the chief and his people rebuild it immediately. Fearing that his power was being undermined, and encouraged to

¹³ RCAF 5/4/31/49, 10–11; A. Harold Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church*, vol. III: Fiji and Rotuma (Melbourne 1978), 127.

¹⁴ Wood, *ibid.* A proposal that Rotuma be included with Fiji had in fact been made, but a misreading of a cable to the Governor of Fiji led to its exclusion (William J. E. Eason, *A Short History of Rotuma* (Suva 1951), 60).

¹⁵ RCAF 5/4/31/49, 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Histoire Sumi*, 35–52 (PMB Reel 159).

¹⁸ Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 128.

rebel by the Wesleyan chiefs and missionaries, Riamkau asserted his authority as high chief and declared himself in charge of all the affairs of Fag'uta including the schools and other missionary projects.¹⁹ For several years Riamkau, nominally Catholic, appears to have been allied with neither religious faction although actively pressed by missionaries and chiefs from both sides. By August 1876 he had decided to re-commit himself as Catholic and in 1877 asked to be appointed to a minor religious office.²⁰ Meanwhile, Fletcher had left Rotuma and been replaced by the more strongly anti-Catholic Rev. Thomas Moore. Tensions again began to build.

Early in 1878 Maraf called together all Rotuman district chiefs, including Riamkau, who, informed that if he did not become a Wesleyan another war might ensue, refused to convert, or attend future meetings. Maraf, with the consent of the other chiefs, imposed a fine of £6 on any chief absent from council meetings, Riamkau refused to pay and both sides began to take up arms and talk of war. In an attempt to avert war Albert and Zerubbabel, a sub-chief from Noa'tau,²¹ went to Fag'uta and asked Riamkau to come with them to Noa'tau to discuss the situation. At Noa'tau, the Wesleyan chiefs showed him their assembled forces, three times as numerous as his own, and gave him an ultimatum: convert and pay the fine or face a war. Seeing the hopelessness of his situation, Riamkau paid his fine and was converted to Wesleyanism. At the ceremonies celebrating his conversion, the chiefs announced that they now wished all the chiefs on Rotuma to become Protestant.²²

There remained only one Catholic chief, Mora at Pepjei, who steadfastly refused to convert. Maraf and his combined forces then declared war on Mora.²³ On 28 May 1878, the Protestant forces attacked Pepjei. Outnumbered, the Catholics under Mora abandoned their positions on the night of 29 May and fled to the missionary station at Juju where they joined other Catholic forces and Riamkau, who deserted the Wesleyans after the initial battle.²⁴ For over a month the situation continued as an uneasy stand-off, with periodic skirmishing. The final decisive encounter took place on 2 July, when an estimated 150 Wesleyans attacked eight Catholics on sentry duty. The beleaguered Catholics sounded the alarm, and others, including Riamkau and Mora, joined the battle. Riamkau was mortally wounded and Mora was wounded three times in his left arm. The Wesleyans eventually fell back, and that evening Riamkau died at Juju, having received the last rites of the Catholic church.²⁵

¹⁹ *Histoire Sumi*, 57–58 (PMB Reel 159).

²⁰ *Histoire Sumi*, 71 (PMB Reel 159).

²¹ Zerubbabel Urakmata was one of the Wesleyans' most successful proselytisers and is frequently mentioned in early accounts of Rotuman conversion to Christianity.

²² *Histoire Sumi*, 73–74 (PMB Reel 159).

²³ *Histoire Sumi*, 74–75 (PMB Reel 159).

²⁴ *Histoire Sumi*, 76, 81 (PMB Reel 159); *Historique*, 15 (PMB Reel 159).

²⁵ *Historique*, 16–17 (PMB Reel 159).

With his death, the war ended. As victor Maraf appointed a new chief for Fag'uta, a Wesleyan with the title Osias, but he refused to permit any confiscation of land and gave protection to the Catholic missionaries, their church and property.²⁶ On 30 October 1878 a French warship, the *Segond*, arrived and Commander Richier met both sides separately, securing from the Wesleyans an agreement to abide by the Treaty of *Hamelin*.²⁷ Apparently there was also some talk among the Catholics of asking the French to annex Rotuma,²⁸ which may have prompted Maraf's letter of 19 June 1879 to the Governor of Fiji. Indications are, however, that internal politics provided a more compelling reason. Maraf wrote that the other chiefs were dissatisfied with him, suggesting they were unprepared to accept his attempts to establish political hegemony on the island. He attributed their dissatisfaction 'to my receiving certain money from a Mr. Weber, a German residing in Samoa', but went on to say that the 'real' cause was that 'they object to my having the ruling power over them', and that 'this disaffection will continue and will probably cause another war'. He told the Governor that soon after he was elected leader the chiefs 'withdrew the power placed in me and wished to go to war as they objected to be under one Chieftdom or Government but instead that each Chief should rule in his own district'.²⁹ It is apparent from this letter, and other documents, that the wars were motivated by more than religious fervor. The reference to Maraf's receiving money from Weber, the head of J. C. Godeffroy and Son, suggests that he was using his position to further his own welfare and to control trade.³⁰ It is also clear that traditional rivalries played a central role in all the battles.

'IL Y AURAIT UN ÉPREUVE, et la religion qui triompherait serait la vraie, il faudrait chasser l'autre', wrote Trouillet.³¹ Although the Catholic fathers had been first to establish a European-led mission on the island, in 1846, they were forced to close it down in 1853 as a result of persecution by non-Christian chiefs and a lack of converts, and did not return until 1868.³² In the interim (1865), the Rev. William Fletcher, preceded by two Samoan teachers left by John Williams in 1839, four Wesleyan Tongan teachers brought in 1841 by John Waterhouse, and a number of Fijian pastor-teachers, established a Wesleyan mission. Although they had only limited success in converting Rotumans, Fletcher's predecessors laid much

²⁶ Eason, *A Short History*, 58.

²⁷ Historique, 15–16 (PMB Reel 159).

²⁸ Eason, *A Short History*, 60.

²⁹ Historical Notes on Cession of Rotuma, Suva, National Archives of Fiji.

³⁰ According to Westbrook's account, two German traders on the island, Captain Stammerjohn, trading for a German firm in Fiji, and Captain Axeman, trading for the Deutsche Handels- und Plantagen-Gesellschaft of Samoa, 'made representations' to the Fiji government about the war, presumably requesting the government take steps to insure stability (Dana, *Gods Who Die*, 148).

³¹ Histoire Sumi, 16 (PMB Reel 159).

³² RCAF 5/4/31/49, 1–3.

of the groundwork for his more fruitful efforts.³³ During his three years as sole European missionary on the island Fletcher consolidated previous gains, accelerated the pace of conversion, and secured the support of several powerful chiefs. Hence, when Frs Trouillet and Dezest arrived on Rotuma in 1868 they faced an uphill battle for Rotuman souls and the allegiance of the chiefs.

These circumstances came to define the Catholic agenda. It was an agenda aimed at surviving in the face of great difficulty. Confronted with a choice of staying and contending for Rotuman allegiance against a well-established competitor, or leaving, the Catholic priests saw in their situation a test of faith, for themselves and their converts. The resulting agenda lent itself to the rhetoric of martyrdom, a language they knew would be appreciated by their compatriots, which heavily colours the writings of Fr Trouillet, who served on the island from 1868 until 1906. His letters, journals and unpublished 'Histoire de Rotuma' are prime sources of information on the wars of 1871 and 1878. Trouillet was the only European missionary on the island for both conflicts and his Catholic fold twice suffered defeat. But it is the very notion of defeat and survival in adversity, followed by eventual 'success', that Trouillet employs as a central theme. In his construction of history Trouillet turns the plight of Rotuma's Catholics into a Pacific version of a 'Saint's Life' — a tale replete with piety, persecution, martyrdom and the survival of the 'true' faith with the help of God.

Soon after re-establishing their mission the Catholic Fathers began to write of impending persecution at the hands of the 'heretics'. In his journal entry for 2 October 1869 Fr Dezest wrote that the Wesleyan minister was preaching to his congregation that 'it is necessary to make away with the lotu pope [Catholic mission] because it is impeding the progress of the heretical religion'.³⁴ As tensions built over the next two years, so did the rhetoric of martyrdom, culminating in an account of the 1871 fighting written by Trouillet to his superior, R. P. Poupinel, in which Trouillet presented himself in the standard image of a Catholic martyr.³⁵ He depicted the Protestants as always on the move, threatening hostility, while the Catholics simply wanted to live peaceably. He wrote of the 'lies' of 'heresy' versus the 'truth' of Catholicism, of the values of 'faith, baptism, confession, and communion' that would keep the Catholic cause alive through their 'martyrdom on Rotuma'.³⁶

The fighting of 29 February 1871 produced the first 'authentic' Rotuman martyr, Jean Ninaf. Ninaf, a Catholic convert who had first warned the Catholics of the approaching Protestant forces, was fatally wounded in a subsequent

³³ Rev. James Calvert, visiting Rotuma in 1864, the year before Fletcher arrived, reported finding 1,200 people worshipping in 11 chapels, with 22 local preachers and 250 members meeting regularly in members' classes (Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 122).

³⁴ *Historique*, 2 (PMB Reel 159).

³⁵ Trouillet to Poupinel, 10 Mar. 1871, Catholic Diocesan Office, Suva, Fiji (PMB Reel 428).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

skirmish and is said to have been the 'best' Catholic and to have died 'while reciting his rosary'.³⁷

A Catholic account of the 1878 war based on Trouillet's diary also is couched in the rhetoric of martyrdom. The clearest example of Trouillet's construction of a figure in the role of 'martyr' is his treatment of Riamkau, the unpredictable chief of Juju on whose support the Catholics largely depended for their long-term survival. Early accounts of Riamkau depict him as anything but the fervent Catholic of which martyrs are made. His first mention in Trouillet's writings depicts him as an opportunist: 'Riamkau was a Wesleyan for political reasons at our arrival, the missionaries being established in his country, he quickly became Catholic always for political reasons'.³⁸ In June 1868 Riamkau is described as 'a very difficult character, constantly opposing himself to the fathers'.³⁹ On 26 November 1874 Trouillet wrote: 'At this time continual difficulties with Riamkau; one would say that authority diminishes him, so much is he arrogant and jealous'.⁴⁰ Throughout the years that follow, Riamkau's image in Trouillet's writing continually shifts as he vacillates between Catholicism and Wesleyanism and demands specific honours and privileges in exchange for his support. Although Trouillet's account of the early phases of the 1878 war suggests that he saw Riamkau as a coward who was largely responsible for Mora's defeat, following his death in the final skirmish of the war Riamkau is abruptly transformed into a heroic martyr:

Riamkao wanted enough time to receive the succor of religion and to repair the scandals that he had given to his country; he publicly repented anew of all that he had done against his people and the religion; recognized and adored the hand of God who struck him, finally he died in the best disposition, after having again ordered his wife and his children to never become Wesleyan.⁴¹

So, after a checkered career, Riamkau becomes the grandest (and last) martyr in the Catholic ordeal, a repentant sinner dying a noble death in a holy cause. Trouillet's account of religious trials and tribulations finds elegant closure in the sanctified death of one of its central characters.

Trouillet's history contains another central theme — French nationalism. It was often to French warships and not to God that Trouillet appealed for salvation, and his cause was twice served by them. The Marist order of missionaries, to which Trouillet belonged, were first founded by the French in 1836 in response to the colonial and missionary success of British interests in the Pacific.⁴² Being in most cases latecomers to islands already missionised by the

³⁷ *Historique*, 2 (PMB Reel 159).

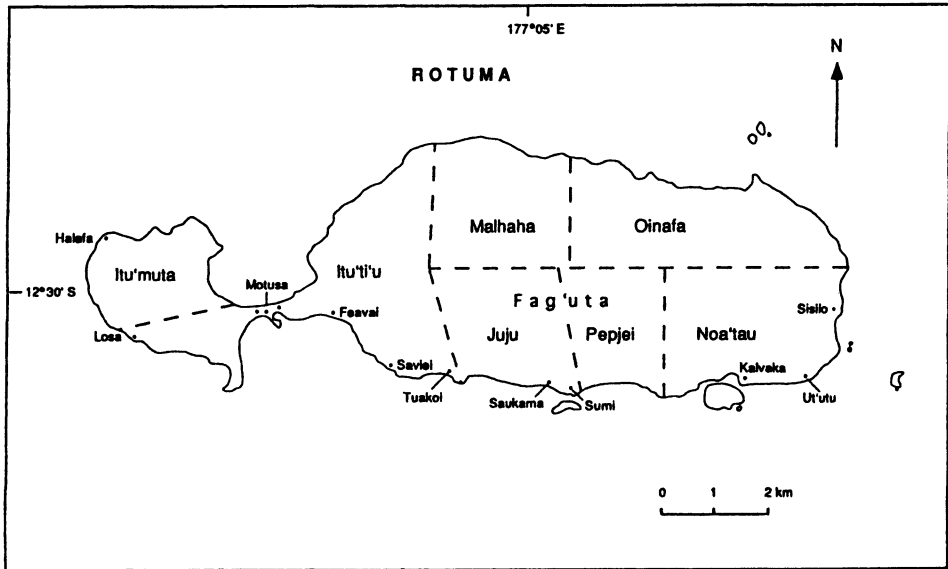
³⁸ *Histoire Sumi*, 6 (PMB Reel 159).

³⁹ *Historique*, 1 (PMB Reel 159).

⁴⁰ *Historique*, 14 (PMB Reel 159).

⁴¹ *Histoire Sumi*, 82 (PMB Reel 159).

⁴² Paul van der Grijp, 'Christian confrontations in paradise: Catholic proselytizing of a Protestant mission in Oceania', *Anthropos*, 88 (1993), 136.



Adapted from a map drawn by Joan Lawrence; since interior district boundaries are problematic they have been drawn with dotted lines.

Wesleyans, the Marists were usually fighting a difficult battle. But they were aided by the threat that French warships would punish those harming the Marist cause.⁴³ Marist missionaries in Tonga were helped repeatedly by the arrival of French warships, whose captains both intimidated their enemies and drew up treaties guaranteeing Catholics the right to practice their religion freely.⁴⁴ In Trouillet's view a fear of French warships restrained Rotuma's Wesleyan chiefs from further attacks on the Catholics and was instrumental in securing their position.⁴⁵

Trouillet's history, then, is a story meant to be read by both bishops and government ministers, a stereotyped parable of Catholic courage and an appeal for protection of French national interests. Wesleyan accounts of the 1871 and 1878 wars were sparse by comparison. In letters and reports from John Osborne (serving 1870–73) and Thomas Moore (1875–78), the wars seem little more than a mild disturbance of the missionisation process. Wesleyan sources, whether describing converts, houses, or barrels of coconut oil, read more like the account books of an emerging corporation than of a sacred mission. This difference

⁴³ Ibid., 138.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ That Rotumans were aware at a very early date that the struggle between Christian sects was confounded by national politics is shown by a comment recorded by Fletcher in 1866: 'They [the Rotumans] do not understand what the lotu is, especially as some speak of a rotu [sic] Lonidoni and a rotu Franise [French]', *Wesleyan Missionary Notices*, 37 (Oct. 1866).

undoubtedly has to do with the divergent philosophies of the missionary groups. While the Catholic Church explicitly ordered its missionaries to convert the people and live amongst them while following the principles of 'poverty, celibacy, and obedience',⁴⁶ for Protestants the central notion was that 'Christianity and civilization advanced hand in hand'.⁴⁷ Their mission was not only to gain converts but also to Westernise, to make the world more like Britain and, perhaps most importantly, to have the mission pay for itself in the process.

Catholic missionary sources say little about the personal appearance of Rotumans, housing or the condition of villages. In the Wesleyan accounts appearances form a major theme and progress is measured as much in clothing and housing as in baptisms. Shortly after his arrival in 1865 Fletcher wrote the following about Rotumans who had chosen to adopt Western clothing:

The contrast between the skins and garments, stained with turmeric and the clean shirts and dresses, was too marked to be overlooked. The young men of the district appeared in a sort of uniform, clean white shirts, and clean cloth wrapped about them in place of trousers. The idea was their own: the effect was good.⁴⁸

Contrasting 'heathen' and Wesleyan sections of a village Fletcher remarked: 'As I reached the houses of the heathen part of the village, the difference was very marked. Everything was dirty, Turmeric was on all sides.'⁴⁹

Commenting on the differences between Catholic converts and 'heathens' Fletcher wrote that it was hard 'to tell a Papist from a professed heathen by his outward gait and demeanour. There is the same unkempt head of long hair, the same daubing with turmeric; indeed, the same wild, and unpolished, and unwholesome appearance.'⁵⁰ Shortly after the 1871 war Osborne used the same criteria in contrasting Wesleyanism and Catholicism.⁵¹ Wesleyan missionaries waged a war of words contrasting the results of their civilising influence with the material, and by implication spiritual, squalor of Catholics and 'heathens' alike.

Cost accounting also pervades Wesleyan documents. On a small station in a remote part of the Pacific, the Wesleyan missionaries were involved in a constant effort to convince their superiors that the mission could be turned to profitable ends. Shortly after his arrival Fletcher struck this theme:

⁴⁶ Van der Grijp, 'Christian confrontations', 146.

⁴⁷ C. S. Horne, *The Story of the London Missionary Society* (London 1904), 40.

⁴⁸ *Wesleyan Missionary Notices*, 35 (Apr. 1866).

⁴⁹ It should be pointed out that the notion of Rotumans as 'dirty' stemmed from the missionaries' perception of turmeric, which Rotumans used, mixed with coconut oil, as an ointment for hygienic and ritual purposes (A. Howard and J. Rensel, 'Only skin deep: social order and the body on Rotuma', in M. Godelier and S. Strathern (eds), *The Human Body and Society* (forthcoming)). George Bennett, a physician who visited Rotuma in 1830, had a quite different response: 'The natives are cleanly both in their persons and habits: the custom of rubbing their bodies with scented cocoanut oil, as well as the aromatic smell of turmeric, gives them an agreeable odour' (George Bennett, 'A recent visit to several of the Polynesian islands', *United Service Journal*, 33 (1831), 475).

⁵⁰ *Wesleyan Missionary Notices*, 31 (Apr. 1865).

⁵¹ Osborne, 2 Jan. 1873, Methodist Church Archives, Sydney, Mitchell Library (hereinafter MCA).

There is much in the peculiar circumstances of the island and in the character of its inhabitants, to check the fair and prosperous development of the work of God. Still all past outlay of labour and money have already been well repaid.⁵²

The rhetoric of profit and loss in letters and reports sent by Wesleyan ministers was so pervasive that the number of souls saved seems a commodity whose production was set against the necessary outlay. Just before the war of 1878, Moore summed up the 'business' of conversion as follows:

What have we got for the labour and money expended on [Rotuma]? about 600 converts & something over 2000 nominal adherents (compared to 30,000 Fijians, for instance). These are facts to be thankful for, but there are other fields in these seas which for the same amount of labor & money would have yielded 6000 converts . . . Here we have one of the richest Islands in the South Pacific, & yet from the outset she has not anything like defrayed the current expenses. She has been a dead loss financially from the first.⁵³

With regard to the conflicts, Osborne and Moore portrayed themselves as peacemakers while placing blame on the Catholic priests. Two years after the 1871 war, Osborne asserted, 'My personal influence alone has prevented the Protestants from chastising the Papists as they deserve'.⁵⁴ Moore was even more adamant in his disavowal of responsibility, insisting that the 1878 war was the result of Riamkau's political ambitions, although he accuses the priests of encouraging Riamkau and providing bad advice. The Catholics are portrayed as rebelling against a legitimately constituted government headed by Maraf. Moore's assessment after the war included the following passage:

There has been a combination of causes, but I can assure you that the causes were purely political; I state this emphatically . . . The priests have complicated matters very much by their meddling and by their persistent reiteration that the war was one of religious persecution carried on by the Government party for the extermination of Roman Catholics generally on the island . . . The Government party sent letter after letter, and by every possible means endeavoured to show them that the war was purely political . . . The Papists continue now, as they did before, in the enjoyment of full religious liberty.⁵⁵

In a subsequent letter Moore stresses material rather than human costs:

The war lasted over two months. The whole of the tribes being involved there was fearful destruction of property — livestock, gardens, & nuts were destroyed not only in the immediate vicinity of the battle-ground, but all through the Island. A good deal of money was wasted on fire arms, ammunition & war costumes. All this was going on just at the time when we ought to have been holding our Missionary meetings. My hopes were not very high for this year's contribution. But now though late we are holding our meetings, and we will not do so badly after all.⁵⁶

⁵² Cited in Thomas Williams and James Calvert, *Fiji and the Fijians: and Missionary Labours among the Cannibals* (London 1870), 586.

⁵³ Moore to Chapman, 6 May 1878, MCA; see also Osborne to Rabone, 11 July 1872, MCA. That South Sea Islanders were well aware of the Wesleyans' obsession with profit is testified to by J. W. Boddam-Whetham (*Pearls of the Pacific* (London 1876), 263), who visited Rotuma shortly after the 1871 war.

⁵⁴ Osborne to Chapman, 1 Mar. 1873, quoted in Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 127.

⁵⁵ Moore to Chapman, 18 July 1878, quoted in *ibid.*, 129.

⁵⁶ Moore to Chapman, 23 Sept. 1878, MCA.

Moore insisted that the war 'had nothing to do with either Wesleyans or Roman Catholics as such', and castigated the French priests for raising the rallying cry of religion and telling their people that 'the heretics' would massacre them.

Osborne and Moore marginalised the wars, making them all but irrelevant to the more important processes of profitably running their mission and continuing their conversion and building programmes. What to Trouillet were the heroic struggles of martyrs to a religious cause, to Osborne and Moore were little more than negative items on a balance sheet.

Reconstructing Rotuman chiefs' agendas during the 19th century is more difficult. They wrote little (Maraf's letter to the Governor to Fiji is one of the rare surviving documents). We must rely on oral histories as told to European recorders, augmented by an analysis of chieftainship and warfare on Rotuma. Two oral accounts are particularly valuable. One was the one given by Chief Albert of Itu'ti'u to J. Stanley Gardiner in 1896, when Albert was in his late 60s. He was a main participant in both wars, and a leading figure in the period leading up to, and immediately following, Rotuma's cession to Britain. The other account is provided by Trouillet, who around 1873 recorded Rotuma's oral history from unnamed Rotumans. Additional sources include brief narratives told to the anthropologists A. M. Hocart, who visited Rotuma in 1913, and Gordon MacGregor, who was there in 1932. Finally, we have drawn on understandings handed down to present day Rotumans and reported to Alan Howard and Jan Rensel during recent ethnographic research.⁵⁷

According to Gardiner's and MacGregor's Rotuman consultants, warfare on Rotuma was conducted in a rather ceremonial fashion. It was common practice for chiefs to send challenges announcing a particular time and place for combat. The day before a feast was held by each side featuring chants (*ki*) and war dances. Typically battles were conducted on flat stretches of beach, precluding ambushes. Prior to engagement each side danced menacingly and tauntingly, and sang verses proclaiming their ferocity. Then each side chanted to solicit the support of their gods. Warriors dressed specially for the occasion. They tied up their hair in topknots and wore conical (*milomilo*) or crescent-shaped (*suru*) hats of basketry decorated with tapa and feathers. Round their necks they wore charms, and they smeared their bodies with coconut oil mixed with turmeric. Prior to the introduction of firearms, the main weapons were spears, clubs and stones, thrown both at distant and close quarters. Wars were usually held for one day only, with the goal of killing the leading chief on the other side. When this occurred the supporters of that chief would withdraw, ending the fighting. As for the spoils of victory, Gardiner wrote:

⁵⁷ Howard and Rensel made five field trips to Rotuma between 1987 and 1991.

There were no great advantages to be gained from the war by the winning side. The villages of the vanquished might be sacked, but they were seldom burnt; their plantations might be overrun, but there was little willful destruction. All pigs were, of course, regarded as legitimate spoil. The vanquished would perhaps promise to pay to the conquerors so many baskets of provisions or so many mats and canoes, a promise which was always faithfully and speedily performed, even though they might accompany the last part of the payment with a fresh declaration of war. The victorious side obtained no territorial aggrandisement, as it was to the common interest of all to maintain the integrity of the land, and the victors might on some future occasion be themselves in the position of the vanquished. Nominally first-fruits were claimed by the victors from the chief of the vanquished, or perhaps the victors might depose the conquered chiefs, and put nominees in their places . . . Such a course had, however, relatively little permanence . . . There was no such thing as indiscriminate slaughter or debauchery of the women after a fight.⁵⁸

One of MacGregor's consultants, Varomua, also alleged that some of the large and high *fuag ri* 'house foundations' were built by labour from defeated districts, suggesting the possibility of labour as a form of tribute.

Rotuman custom prevailed in the 1871 and 1878 wars, the former being a one-day encounter while the latter involved three separate, limited, fights. In 1871 when damage was done to the interior of the Catholic church there was no pursuit, and in 1878 Maraf refused to allow confiscation of property following his victory. There were some innovations. Communion and Christian prayers took the place of chants and supplications to local gods. Westbrook describes the new dress code for warriors:

It was the custom to dress a dead or dying Rotuman in his best suit of clothing and during the heavy fighting [in the 1871 war] they wore their best European clothes, collar and tie included.

As soon as the war commenced there was a concerted rush for European clothiers — black suits, frock coats, and even dress suits. One Fiji firm made quite a good thing out of it by buying up all the dark clothing in Levuka, then the principal port of Fiji.

The oddest part of the islanders' battle ensemble was this: though dressed as European gentlemen in black suits and starched, stiffly-ironed shirts, they wore a head-gear of basketware. This skull-covering [*milomilo*] was bravely trimmed with feathers and red cloth and it resembled an Indian head-dress put on backwards.⁵⁹

Rotuman district chiefs are selected as adults from a designated set of bilineal kin groups (*mosega*). Once selected and installed, the new chief takes a title (*as togi*) and normally serves in the position for life. The chief of Noa'tau has almost always, to the present, taken the title Maraf; the title Riamkau belongs to Juju district and was in constant use from the time European recording began (in the 1820s) until the death of Riamkau in 1878. In the accounts below, references to Maraf and Riamkau are to titles, not to individuals.

⁵⁸ Gardiner, 'Natives of Rotuma', 470–1.

⁵⁹ Dana, *Gods Who Die*, 147.

For Rotumans the wars of 1871 and 1878 were part of a sequence of chiefly struggles, primarily involving Riamkau and Maraf. Rotuman accounts stress place with wars named for the locations of the battles, while causation is generally attributed to insults and abuses of power. Albert begins with the 'great Malhaha War', dated by Gardiner at around the beginning of the 19th century,⁶⁰ it was provoked, according to Albert, by a *sau*, residing in Savlei, who proposed to take a Malhaha woman as his wife without first sending away his current spouse. While this in itself was not improper, he asked the woman directly, when she and her two brothers brought an offering of food, rather than sending an official delegation to their home in Malhaha. As a consequence the woman's brothers made the chief of Malhaha *sau* and established him in Motusa. Later they brought him back to Malhaha, leaving a substitute in his place, whereupon Riamkau went to Motusa, conferred the *sauship* on a man of his own choice, and brought him to Fag'uta. In consequence, Maraf stepped in and a war ensued involving Noa'tau, Oinafa and Malhaha on one side, and Fag'uta, Itu'ti'u and Itu'muta on the other, led by Maraf and Riamkau respectively. Albert reported that fighting was widespread and took place over several days, with heavy casualties; he told Gardiner that nearly all the young men on both sides were killed with many villages entirely depopulated.⁶¹ The brunt of the fighting, however, was said to have involved Noa'tau and Fag'uta.

After a quiescent period, and increased traffic with Europeans, Maraf acquired a cannon from one of the many whalers that re-provisioned at Rotuma. Given this perceived advantage, according to Albert, he spoiled for a fight with Riamkau. An opportunity soon arose when a chief from Tuakoi, Itu'ti'u, on his way to see Maraf, passed by Fag'uta in his canoe without respectfully lowering its sail. Since the *sau* was residing in his district, Riamkau was furious at the insult and protested to Maraf, but the latter responded by sailing past Fag'uta on his way to Tuakoi with his sail set, and without loosing his hair.⁶² Riamkau sent a message challenging Maraf to a fight on his return home and received an acceptance. Alerted, the Noa'tau people came through the bush to Tuakoi, dragging the cannon with them. After holding a big dance in Tuakoi, Maraf led his contingent up the coast and met Riamkau at Saukama, Juju. At first the cannon struck terror into the Fag'uta people, but after a few shots it failed, and they rallied. In the ensuing battle, Albert reported, more than 100 Noa'tau men, including Maraf, were killed, while Fag'uta's losses were slight. Riamkau allowed Maraf's body to be taken to Sisilo, the burial place of *sau*, as he had formerly been *sau*; the faulty

⁶⁰ Gardiner made his estimate by using 30 years per generation, based on the participation of Albert's paternal great-grandfather, Froumontou (Gardiner, 'Natives', 474).

⁶¹ This report of carnage should be taken with caution; exaggeration of casualties during warfare appears to be a pan-human propensity, as body counts in Vietnam clearly demonstrated.

⁶² Since tying up one's hair in a knot was identified with warfare, not loosening one's hair was considered a challenging gesture (see MacGregor, Field Notes on Rotuma, 1932, box #1, war and weapons, Honolulu, B. P. Bishop Museum).

cannon served as a headstone. A great number of pigs and an immense quantity of vegetables and mats were paid as indemnity.⁶³

The battle took place in January 1845, according to the Rev. George Turner who visited the island three months later. Turner reported that in addition to Maraf, '27 men fell'; and Riamkau lost two sons and 30 men. He added that Maraf's younger brother Fakraufon took his place.⁶⁴

Another version of the war in Saukama was provided to Hocart in 1913 by a woman from Noa'tau named Akanisi, and was translated into English by another Rotuman, Sosefo. Hocart intersperses his notes with Rotuman words, which, in the interest of providing a readable narrative, we have translated. We have injected some connectives for the same reason. The text is valuable because of the insight it provides into Rotuman notions of the relationship between politics and war in the pre-Christian culture:

Maraf was [a warrior]. Maraf [whose previous name was] Sorkiav was taking [something] to Murorou in Tuakoi and came back in [a] boat. He picked all his best men. The [war party] had gone to sing songs. He picked the best to go by boat, expecting a fight. The rest [were told] to go [inland]. They [danced] all that night till next morning. In the morning Riamkau knew that Maraf would pass and waited in Saukama. Maraf started rowing up and down before Saukama. The people of Riamkau fired a gun to let them know. When they reached the shore they jumped off and put the boat ashore. Maraf put on his [peaked head-dress]. The enemy kept shooting at them. When they had finished dressing, they shot back. Riamkau's people withdrew to [an open area within the village]. Usu, a good stone thrower, threw at Maraf but missed. Maraf [stuck out his chest], shot and missed. Usu ran away and told Riamkau [that Maraf] was [super-human]. Faguta drew back. A lot of people were killed on the beach on both sides. One bullet hit Maraf, who then [shook with rage] and shot dead a man on the other side. They fired at him again and wounded him, but he did not faint. He tried to get at Riamkau, but could not, but Riamkau's two sons [were] killed. Maraf was killed, full of bullets. Utut and Kalvak [the people of adjacent parts of Noa'tau] then ran away firing in [the] air. [The people of] Faguta killed the remaining. They made a big grave and put all into the grave with Maraf . . .

All the [war party] brought in the boat were finished, and Faguta nearly so. Fakrofon, brother of Maraf Sorkiav, was angry with Faguta and sent [a] message to Fonagrottoi of Oinafa, [suggesting that they join together to avenge Maraf's death].

[The people of] Oinafa went through the bush and Fakrofon [went] on the beach. Oinafa got there first. Riamkau knew it and came to Foragrottoi and [begged] Foragrottoi to [convey his apology to] Fakrofon . . . But Fakrofon had sent a message that he would kill men, women and children. Riamkau offered to return the [paramountcy of Rotuma]. Faguta had taken [the paramountcy] of Rotuma which belonged to Noatau. They knocked off the war and came and dug up Maraf, ended the war and buried him near Emele Tue's place.

⁶³ Gardiner, 'Natives', 474–5.

⁶⁴ George Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia* (London 1861), 356.

When they had buried him, Fakrofon [was grateful to] Foragrototi [and] Muamea, because they had come to fight when he asked. So he gave the [paramountcy] to Foragrototi, [including the right to choose all the *sau*], etc. To Muamea he gave [the district] of Noatau. Muamea lived on Maraf's big [house foundation] in Vairahi.⁶⁵

The war in Saukama was immortalised by Rotumans in a *temo* 'chant' that has been passed down to the current generation. The words are as follows:⁶⁶

Mose vāhi ma Ferei Tuan'āki
Irava tofi te ma vāhi
Tiporotu noho ma tārī tārī
La'oag 'e ufa, suag 'e sāsī
Taio ta surua 'ona lalāvi
Suakmas ta soni sa'āki
Sapo la mou 'omura terān
Furi ta to ma ho'i 'e sās

'Itake vere ta so'so'āk
Furi ta to ma ho'i 'e sās

'Aura vāh'ia, lagi ta hā

Tohia 'e Poi ma pelu ta vāh
Suru ta fāi rāni ma soko tār

Tohia 'e Poi ma pelu ta vāh

Had spent the night with Ferei Tua'naki
Irava had arranged them in columns
Tiporotu was awaiting
Some came by land, some came by sea
Taio's war headdress of feathers was on
Suakmas ran while striking
Go forth and make it your day.

The booming of the big gun sent them
away by sea,

Strong people fell in heaps.

The booming of the big gun sent them
away by sea,

When you two finished fighting it
looked like a storm had struck,

Reaching Poi, the fighting stopped.

The warriors named the date and the
opponents responded,

Reaching Poi, the fighting stopped.

In a later war (around 1858 according to Trouillet, when Tokaniua of Oinafa attempted to install a Wesleyan *sau*), Maraf and Riamkau were allies. This was before either Maraf or Riamkau had converted to Christianity. According to Trouillet's unidentified consultant, it was at this time that Riamkau handed over the position of *fakpure* to Maraf, as a reward for his assistance, and on condition that Maraf remain loyal and not abuse his power. But, Trouillet's consultant told him, once Maraf consolidated his authority he declared his 'independence' and the struggle was renewed.⁶⁷

When European missionaries arrived considerable manoeuvring took place among the chiefs as they sought to align themselves with the denomination that would bring them the most benefits, Maraf, Riamkau, and others shifting their affiliations between Wesleyanism, Catholicism and 'heathenism' according to each new situation — a source of endless consternation to the missionaries.

⁶⁵ A. M. Hocart, Field Notes on Rotuma, n.d., Wellington, Turnbull Library.

⁶⁶ We are grateful to Elisapeti Inia for providing us with the text of this *temo*; the translation to English is hers.

⁶⁷ Notebook I — Histoire de Rotuma Depuis L'Origine des Temps Fabuleux Jusqu'au Retour des Catholiques en 1868, 62, Catholic Diocesan Office, Suva, Fiji (PMB Reel 159). It should be noted that Trouillet's informant was almost certainly from Fag'uta, whereas Hocart's was from Noa'tau. The discrepancies in accounts most likely represent different historical perspectives influenced in large measure by district politics.

Hence, as Trouillet observes, religious allegiances were often made 'toujours pour politique' rather than for other motives. Trouillet speculated that Maraf initially had been inclined to join the Catholics but changed his mind when he discovered that, since the Catholics were situated in Riamkau's district, this would mean that he would be expected to submit to Riamkau's authority.⁶⁸ In May 1868 Trouillet reported Maraf's conversion to Wesleyanism and noted that Riamkau, as yet unconverted, was leaning in that direction.⁶⁹ During the Wesleyan rebellion against Tauragtoak in 1871 both Riamkau and Maraf appear to have remained relatively neutral, although Riamkau's refusal to aid the Catholic side is said to have angered the people in his district and eroded his power base.⁷⁰ With Tauragtoak's defeat, the office of *sau* was effectively ended and the chieftainship of Itu'ti'u was given to Albert.

Albert's account of the 1871 conflict, recorded by Gardiner, emphasises political manoeuvring and chiefly abuses of power (as well as an apparent lack of modesty). Indicative of the Rotuman emphasis on place, Albert referred to the 'Motusa War' but apparently was unable to date it accurately since Gardiner places the event 'in 1869 or 1870'.

While the rest of the island was for the most part Roman Catholic or Wesleyan, the south side of Itoteu [Itu'ti'u] and to some extent the north side also still clung to the old religion; the people of Matusa [Motusa] and Losa, and indeed the whole of the west end of Itoteu, were Christian. Taurantoka [Tauragtoak] was chief of Itoteu, and had a *sou* in Savalei [Savlei]; Morseu [Marseu] was the minor chief of Losa and Halafa, while Mafroa was acting for his father along the north side of Itoteu; none of these were Christians. It really commenced by Morseu keeping on continually taking pigs from Losa and Halafa, till these places got exasperated and refused to give him any more, threatening to shoot any one, they might find taking them. Their leader in this was Fakamanoa, a big name in Itoteu, and the father of the present chief [i.e. Albert]. Induced however by a native Fijian missionary, they took as a *faksoro* [formal request]⁷¹ to Morseu a pig and a root of *kava*. He accepted it, but on the next day seized a pig, and on the day after, trying to seize another, he was resisted, and a deputation sent to Taurantoka with a root of *kava*; Taurantoka, in reply, promised to take Losa and Halafa under his own charge. Meantime Mafroa and his father had been baptised into the Wesleyan body, and refused *ipso facto* to have anything to do with the *sou*. Taurantoka at once declared war; the white missionary stepped in and tried to stop it, but a fight was inevitable. It was then the south side of Itoteu, under Taurantoka and Morseu, against the rest of Itoteu, under Fakamanoa, Mafroa, and Albert. The latter was a man of considerable influence, owing to his connection with the missions, of a chief[ly] family, and living in Matusa. The battle took place almost in Matusa, on the road along the south side of the island, at dawn, lasting until

⁶⁸ Histoire Sumi, 12–13 (PMB Reel 159).

⁶⁹ Historique, 1 (PMB Reel 159).

⁷⁰ Historique, 3 (PMB Reel 159).

⁷¹ The Rotuman word *faksoro* can be used either to designate a formal apology (as in Gardiner's text describing the previous war between Maraf and Riamkau in Fag'uta), or as a formal supplication, as in this context.

midday. Nearly all the fighting was on the relatively open beach flat; it consisted of desultory firing from behind coconut trees. About sixty of Taurantoka's people were killed before he took to flight. As a result the office of *sou* was abolished, Taurantoka and Marseu baptised, and Albert, who had shown throughout very conspicuous bravery, made chief of Itoteu.⁷²

Elisapeti Inia, a retired schoolteacher and great-granddaughter of Tauragtoak, tells a similar story. Her home is in Savlei, where Tauragtoak kept the *sau*. Elisapeti wrote an account of the war in a reader she prepared in the Rotuman language for schoolchildren. Her narrative corresponds in most respects with Albert's, and indeed may have been influenced by it, but she adds interesting details and twists. She also differs from Albert with regard to the role played by Osborne, the Wesleyan missionary. Elisapeti points out that Marseu was Riamkau's son, and Tauragtoak his sister's son; thus Marseu and Tauragtoak were first cousins. According to her narrative, after the pig incidents Marseu, worried that the Wesleyans would attack him, sent kava to Tauragtoak to ask for his help. She holds that, encouraged by Osborne, Albert and Fakmanoa initiated the attack on Tauragtoak, who was on his way to aid Marseu. Tauragtoak turned to Riamkau for aid, but none came, in part, she says, because Maraf told Riamkau not to assist.

In the years that followed, more and more chiefs converted to Wesleyanism and became loyal to Maraf, whose position as paramount chief was consolidated. Riamkau, although he, too, laid claim to paramountcy, was increasingly isolated. According to Trouillet, as Maraf's power grew, so did his ambition to eliminate Riamkau: 'The great power is still there: by fact, in Malafu, Wesleyan, and by right in Riamkau, Catholic, here is the source of both the political and religious quarrel'.⁷³ Gardiner's text reporting the final clash in 1878, constructed it appears from discussions with Albert and the current Maraf (in 1896), again provides a scenario more complex than that presented by European observer-participants.

The last great war was in 1878, and was practically Wesleyans v. Roman Catholics. Really it was largely brought about by white men, working on the old enmity between Marafu and Riemkou. It arose through the intrigues of Albert, who wished at the council meetings of the chiefs to get his name called for *kava* before that of Tavo, the chief of Oinafa. Riemkou was supporting him, as he was jealous of Marafu, who was both chief of his district and *fakpure*, or head chief, of the island. Albert then in a meeting at Oinafa brought up his own matter and that of Marafu's two offices; Marafu replied through his brother Hauseu, who was his spokesman, or *hoasog* [*haiasoag* 'helper'], that, as far as the chieftainship of his district was concerned, it was no business of theirs, and that, as he was entitled to receive the *kava* first, it was his business to see that it was called to all in their proper order. Riemkou did not attend the next meeting of the council, and, as he refused to pay a fine, it was

⁷² Gardiner, 'Natives', 475–6.

⁷³ Histoire Sumi, 25 (PMB Reel 159).

considered equivalent to a declaration of war. A white missionary then, called Moore, seems to have gone to Albert, and also into Malaha [Malhaha] and Oinafa, practically preaching a war against the Roman Catholics. As a result, Riemkou brought a *faksoro* [formal apology] to Marafu, who accepted it; and to settle the matter Riemkou let himself be baptised a Wesleyan. The Wesleyans, who had begun to gather, were dispersed, and Riemkou at once turned Roman Catholic again. Marafu . . . informed me that then there was no question of war, and that the affair was considered settled until this missionary came and practically began to preach a war of extermination against the Roman Catholics.⁷⁴

Felise Vuna, a Catholic warrior, gave clear voice to the Rotuman view of the conflict: that to kill the opposing chief was to win the war. As the Wesleyan forces advanced on the Catholics, he shouted, 'Where is Maraf that I may kill him?'⁷⁵ After months of sporadic skirmishes, it was the death of Riamkau, rather than the defeat of the Catholics, that ended the conflict.

Riamkau's death, perhaps more than any other event, epitomises the irony behind contrasting accounts. Trouillet wrote that Riamkau died while directly confronting the Wesleyans; that he offered his life and the authority resting in him for the propagation of the Catholic religion in Rotuma.⁷⁶ George Westbrook makes him seem even more a hero:

The native chief who distinguished himself most in the war was Remkau, the Catholic leader, who put up a very strong fight. Unfortunately for his party, he, in an excess of bravado, jumped out single handed and challenged the Wesleyans with the result that he fell riddled with more than 40 bullets.⁷⁷

The story told by many Rotumans, down to the present, is quite different. They say that Riamkau was killed by one of his own people. As Elisapeti Inia tells it, Riamkau was killed by a man from Fag'uta whose pig he had allegedly appropriated while the man was away from home. The man's wife told her husband that Riamkau had not come to her; he just took the pig without asking. The man then went after Riamkau, who was fighting the Wesleyans, and shot him in the back.⁷⁸ In Inia's version Riamkau did not reconvert to Catholicism until he was mortally wounded.

So, the Rotuman agenda led to a focus on chiefly rivalries on the one hand, and on chiefly abuses of power vis-à-vis their own people on the other. In both the Motusa and Fag'uta wars, chiefs who took pigs from their own people without consent were portrayed as provoking the conflicts. In both instances they were defeated in warfare. The confiscation of pigs symbolically epitomises authority abuse in Rotuman culture, and the ultimate fate of the offending chiefs satisfies Rotuman notions of immanent justice.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Gardiner, 'Natives', 476.

⁷⁵ Historique, 16 (PMB Reel 159).

⁷⁶ Histoire Sumi, 82 (PMB Reel 159).

⁷⁷ George Westbrook, *Island Reminiscences* (Cambridge 1879), 6.

⁷⁸ See also Éason, *A Short History*, 58.

⁷⁹ Alan Howard, 'Dispute management in Rotuma', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 46 (1990), 263–9.

THE WARS ON Rotuma during 1871 and 1878 were the outcomes of a complex web of historical conjunctures involving French Roman Catholic priests, English Wesleyan missionaries and Rotuman chiefs. Others influencing these events included European traders, who provided guns and ammunition; French sea captains, who drew up treaties and made threats; British colonial officials in Fiji, whose presence was always imminent; and perhaps most crucially, a host of Rotumans with vested interests, kinship alliances and grievances. In the final analysis the Rotumans did the fighting.

When we consider the ways in which such narratives are constructed additional factors come to our attention: the audiences for whom accounts were prepared, the public and private agendas being served, the language and literacy skills of reporters and writers, the vagaries of translation. When we approach such documentary materials, mindful as well of voices that will never be heard, we are humbled. We state flatly that a definitive account cannot be produced, but it is a human propensity to offer narratives, with or without reservations, as though they were unequivocal. Our primary interest has been to examine the narratives offered by different categories of participants/observers/commentators for what they reveal about participatory historiography in the Pacific Islands. As we gain a finer-grained understanding of how narratives were produced we place ourselves in a better position to untangle the threads that make up Pacific history.

The simplest perspective was that the wars were purely religious in nature. Such a view appealed to critics of missionisation. Forbes and Westbrook, both writing for general audiences,⁸⁰ placed the blame squarely on the European missionaries. They implicitly juxtapose images of knowledgeable, but hypocritical, Europeans and innocent, unknowing and easily manipulated Rotumans. One senses in their accounts a pandering to romantic images, popularly held by European and American readers at the time, of noble savages being corrupted by jaded agents of civilisation. By attributing causality in such a one-sided manner, however, they deny Rotumans agency — a responsibility for the conduct of their own affairs — and diminish their humanity.

Roman Catholic accounts, produced mostly by French priests, and particularly by Fr Trouillet, focus on the trials and tribulations of the faithful (including, of course, themselves). Their sense of audience is strong. Their narratives seem structured to evoke compassion and sympathy, to elicit moral as well as material support. They draw on images of martyrs and saints as a way of translating Rotuman history into a discourse familiar to European Catholics. In the process, they created martyrs out of men like Riamkau.

⁸⁰ Although Westbrook's account was actually written by Julian Dana, one presumes that Westbrook knew a popular book would result, and constructed his oral narrative with a general audience in mind.

Letters and reports by the British Wesleyan missionaries reveal a preoccupation with 'civilising' the Rotumans and with cost accounting. They give the impression of a business enterprise in which the products are converts, who in appearance and decorum, inside church and out, project an image of European gentility. (Evidently the missionaries succeeded in getting Rotumans to go to war dressed in dark suits, collars and ties!) The issue that preoccupied the Wesleyans was whether the expense of a white missionary on Rotuma was worth it. The wars were mere distractions; they imposed additional costs and so affected the profit/loss equation. The Wesleyan missionaries recognised the importance of chiefly rivalries and preferred to portray the wars as indigenous affairs in which they played no significant part.

But we should not exaggerate the differences between the agendas and proclivities of the two sets of missionaries. To a great extent their agendas overlapped. When we take all their writings into account we find the differences to be of foreground and background; what for one group is underscored, for the other is sub-text. It would be wrong to infer that the Catholics were unconcerned with financial matters. Like the Wesleyans, they had to make their missions pay. The main difference, it appears, is that the Catholic priests, consistent with their vows of poverty, were motivated to downplay financial matters. Nevertheless, they were deeply involved in the money game, as Boddam-Whettam attests:

At Rotumah I was struck by the ingenious method the Roman Catholic priests have adopted for paying the natives for their labour. They, the priests, are all poor men, having as a rule barely sufficient means to support themselves except in a native fashion, and consequently they have no money to expend in wages. They have therefore adopted a system of fines, which when enforced are usually found to exceed in amount the sum due for service. Absence from church is fined; smoking on Sunday, or even walking out, is against the law. Women are fined for not wearing bonnets when attending mass, kava drinking ensures a heavy penalty, and fishing on holy days is strictly forbidden. The chief source of revenue comes from absence from church, as service goes on two or three times a day, and most probably just when the poor people are fishing or cultivating the ground.⁸¹

The Wesleyan missionaries, for their part, included occasional references to hardships that were obviously aimed at evoking sympathy. They too employed the image of suffering to elicit support, although to a lesser degree. And both groups were concerned with acquiring land for churches and mission stations, a matter that is muted in their accounts.

Both sides also played upon international rivalries and sectarian competition. Sprinkled through the narratives are amusing anecdotes illustrating the follies of their rivals. Sometimes rough language proved an embarrassment to outside readers anxious to preserve a notion of Christian virtue based on tolerance, if not

⁸¹ Boddam-Whettam, *Pearls of the Pacific*, 265.

brotherly love. In response to Osborne's depiction of the priests as 'scarlet whores', Lorimer Fision, in a report to the Wesleyan Mission Board, sarcastically commented that the only justification for such an expression would be scriptural, but it decidedly was not.⁸²

Rotuman accounts of the wars, cryptic as they are, and filtered through translation, European recorders and/or generations of oral transmission, remain the most complex. They are vibrant with a sense of place and persons, with actors who have justified or unjustified grievances, whose ambitions lead them to break rules, violate protocol. Causation is diffuse in the Rotuman accounts, with chiefly ambition, historical rivalries and missionary zeal all given a place.

Is it justified, then, to label the wars of 1871 and 1878 'religious wars'? One might argue that to do so would be misleading, that the involvement of Christianity and European missionaries was superficial, given the history of Rotuman warfare. But although the rhetoric of Christianity may have been a veneer, from another standpoint the wars were deeply religious in nature. After all, it was the *mana* of Rotuman chiefs that brought blessings (and wrath) from the gods, and *mana* was demonstrated, among other ways, by success in warfare.

Maraf's letter to the Governor of Fiji brought down the curtain on Rotuman warfare. It paved the way for a new form of power — in the form of colonial administration — and a new shape to Rotuma's narrative history.

⁸² Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 126–7.