

The Missionary Image Paradigm and Response

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Samoa is small country in the Polynesian triangle in the Pacific Islands one with a long, complex political and colonial history. At one time the country was an independent state lead with small tribes and chiefs, however it quickly became a hotspot for colonial and missionary growth. In the early 1800s Christian Missionary activity began to circulate across Oceania. The Christian missionaries sought to convert the previously determined savages into God seeking nobles and civilized people. Missionaries used photographs to capture the successful conversion of Samoans to Christianity. The images studied in this essay primarily result from a corpus collected around the turn of the 20th century almost 70 years after the initial introduction of missionary life on Samoa. They center around the question: How have missionary photographs and counter- missionary imagery contributed to an emerging paradigm between these two bodies of work and as a result done specific kinds of ideological work? The missionary images are characterized by repeated elements that make them identifiable such as: before and after narratives of conversion, lightness and darkness, a jungle based background or an architectural background and a sense of uniformity. This combination of elements and images creates its own paradigm, or a certain vision of the people and events that it documents¹. The Christian missionary work attempted to transform the Samoan people by promoting Christianity. However, Christian missionaries were not successful in entirely wiping the Samoan identity. At the turn of the 19th century when missionization was at its peak and Britain, the United States and Germany were fighting for colonial control of the Samoan state, some photographers and took photographs of Samoans that retained the Samoan sense of political and cultural identity. The images of Samoans that were not explicitly missionary based, countered the emerging missionary

¹ Hall, Stuart. "Chapter 1 Introduction: the paradigm of French humanist photography." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: SAGE Publications, 1997. 76

photographic paradigm and promoted different kinds of ideological frameworks, while ultimately falling into the hegemonic missionary discourse. The photographs were embedded in the missionary discourse but allowed Samoans to promote their indigenous identity in contrast to the missionary portrayal of them. By pulling apart these images, reading the signs and understanding the historical context that surrounds them we can also understand a dominant paradigm and photographic elements that emerges as a result.

The historical context of Christianity in Samoa surrounds the first introduction in passing to Samoans in the early 19th century but none established real dominance. The first European missionaries to arrive in Samoa was John Williams with the London Missionary Society Church (LMS) on August 24th, 1830.² Williams left Samoa after two brief years and which left the remaining missionaries as well as Samoan and Tongan converts to continue Christianity.³ Peter Turner was one of the major missionaries that arrived after John Williams. With him he brought several Tongan missionaries and he was able to convert over 13,000 Samoans to Christianity in a little over a year⁴.

Life on the Samoan mission focused on discipline, morality and work⁵ themes that are reflected in the photography of the time. Samoan missions, just like the photographs, were intended to produce certain kinds of Christian missionary subjects. The images that were taken during the Samoan missionary era were reflective of the kinds of goals and propaganda that the

² Robson, Andrew E. "Malietao, Williams and Samoa's Embrace of Christianity." *The Journal of Pacific History* 44, no. 1 (2009): 21-39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40346686>. 21.

³ Barnes, Shawn S., and Roger C. Green. "From Tongan Meeting House to Samoan Chapel: A Recent Tongan Origin for the Samoan Fale Āfolau." *The Journal of Pacific History* 43, no. 1 (2008): 23-49. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25169785>. 46

⁴ Barnes, 46.

⁵ Ahrens, Prue. "From Darkness to Light: the Story of Conversion in the Reverend George Browns Photographs." *Continuum* 19, no. 2 (2005): 280.

missionaries wanted to produce. Almost all of the images were sent back to Europe as a way to prove to the churches that their efforts were successful in missionization. Missionization was one of the dominant hegemonic discourse of the time and the photographs reflected that. The analysis of missionary photography is one that reflects, the standard conventions of missionary images. For example “Missionary Sister poses with children, Samoa, c. 1900. Photographer unknown (see figure 1) illustrates the discourses of missionization that the missionaries wanted to produce. These images were embedded in the perceptions of Western Europe on Samoa

The image of the missionary sister with the children was taken around 70 years after the initial missionization of Samoa. This image was first commissioned as a postcard. It was a Marist, french Catholic missionary order⁶ based out of Lyon, France. The back of the postcard was blank but the front of the postcard would have held the image. The acknowledgment of the photograph being commissioned as a postcard creates a general understanding that the image was produced for specific audience. The image would have been spread throughout France as a reflection of the “positive” work that Catholic missionaries were completing in Samoa, and the overall beneficial effect that they were having on Samoa. The photographs acted as a way to ground the discourse of conversion and to confirm that it was actually working instead of simply writing about the conversion process Europeans could visibly see the work that was being done. The image on the postcard depicts the “before” narrative. It shows a young catholic woman who is on the precipice of “saving” the young Samoan girls.

The image can be easily identified as a missionary image for several reasons that make the image exemplary of the missionary photographic paradigm. The first and most obvious

⁶ "USC Libraries." Missionary sister poses with children, Samoa, ca.1900-1930 :: International Mission Photography Archive, ca.1860-ca.1960. Accessed March 08, 2018. <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll123/id/49159/rec/22>.

reason is that it features a white woman in a Catholic Christian habit shrouding her face like a halo and wearing a cross. The lighting of the image is focused on her while the six children surrounding her appear to be somewhat shrouded in the shadows. The woman is sitting higher up than the rest of the girls, again establishing her dominance and authority over the situation. She is holding the small child and the view of dominance is only there subtly. The image is also reminiscent of Madonna and Child, a common Christian image that features a woman holding a small baby near her. This calling and remembrance of this image articulates the themes of dominance that are recurring throughout missionization and the themes that are coded in a reading of the image from a Christian perspective. However, it also highlights the “radical otherness”⁷ implied between the two groups and the contrast between the saved woman and the soon to be saved young girls.

The otherness is highlighted by the fact that girls are wearing traditional Samoan clothing as well as flowers in their hair and headbands, they appear to be wearing special clothing for the photograph. They are also all dressed the same creating a sense of uniformity. The background is rugged and forested implying that the Catholic missionary is completing her work in the true jungle that those back in France who were reading the image would have viewed it as. Missionary imagery illustrated the overall story of “savagery and its salvation”⁸ and the lightness that is imbued in the Christian salvation. The lightness of the Christian woman and the darkness of the young Samoan girls imply important parallels between the darkness and the lightness that was the perceived notion of the time. From the missionary perspective, the Samoans were

⁷ Burgin, Victor. "Looking at Photographs." In *Thinking Photography*. 1982, 148.

⁸Lindstrom, Lamont. "Darkness and Light in Black and White: Travelling Mission Imagery from the New Hebrides." In *Touring Pacific Cultures*, edited by ALEXEYEFF KALISSA and TAYLOR JOHN, 33-58. Australia: ANU Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1q1crs3.8>, 42

shrouded in darkness and shadows from which the Samoans needed to be rescued. There was an aspect of continuity to the images. The girls were taught Christianity young and would continue the religion throughout their lives. The Christian missionaries wanted to prove to the church that they were succeeding in this process of conversion. These images told the story of a before and after narrative of life as a Christian in Samoa. They are used as a manipulation and propaganda as a way to show Christian missionaries from other places that the work that is being done is successful. She will soon convert them and they will be part of the ideology that the Christian missionaries are attempting to present as the dominant one. An image that depicts the “after” narrative of conversion and accepts the Christian ideology as the dominant one is “Students of Papauta Girl’s School” , Samoa, ca.1897. Photographer Unknown (see figure 2) which promotes further promotes the hegemonic construction of the imagery.

The image depicts a large group of girls standing in front of a literal hegemonic construction, a church. The image, while slightly blurry, features at least 50 Samoan girls. The girls vary in age range from older looking teenagers or maybe even girl’s in their twenties to younger grade school aged girls. The age variation proves to the missions how the girls will further Christianity. The young girls can be raised on Christianity and the older girls will soon have children and they will be able to raise their children on Christianity.

At the center of the image are two white women. These women are the Christian wives of the missionaries. Their job is to train and convert the young girls and place their own cultural values on them. The fact that the women are above the Samoan girls looking down on them asserts their authority over them as people whose goal it is to make their lives better and to help promote Christianity in Samoa.

The group of women are also seen standing in front of a Christian church. They are pushing emphasis on the idea that their entire lives should surround the mission and the church because all of the girls are standing in front of the church. The church becomes a symbol for the ever looming backdrop of the impact of Christian missionization in Samoa. The new churches and schools acted as a way to “supplant heathen structures”⁹ and provide a new identity for the Samoans one that would agree with the way the Christian missionaries held themselves. The imagery of a large group outside of a church as seen in this image becomes a repeating pattern throughout missionary images. The civilized person moves from the jungle and into buildings. The church and Christ is always present in these images and is always reminding the converts to stay true to Christianity.

The group of women are in white and Western style clothing. The whiteness equates to lightness and the presence of conversion. The Western dress and white clothing proves to the mission that the girls are being properly converted from their previous ideals of savagery and uncivilized nature and into their better equipped and proper future christian lives. Whiteness, not just in skin color but in almost all other types of clothing was intended to signify the purity of the saved Christian. The color is symbolically associated with the purity of Christianity. Whiteness, and lightness, are meant a bright heart and soul meaning, “white skin, white clothing, white heart”¹⁰, they all became associated with a kind of brightness that the Samoans are supposed to want to achieve through the process of missionization. The image of the school girls became representative of the before and after narrative that was intended to prove to the missionaries that they had been successful. These images worked to prove that the Samoans had lost the clothing

⁹ Lindstrom, 44

¹⁰ Lindstrom, 44

and darkness of their previous lives, the things that made them savage and unworthy, like the clothing and jungle exterior that the girls in the first image are wearing. The white missionary process involved imposing order on the chaos and disciplining the bodies by placing them in more rigid western style clothing and building them western style churches.

These images acted as a kind of “evangelical religious propaganda”¹¹ that constructed the power relations in missionary activity and immersed the Samoans in a total change in their way of life. Photography, at the time, was thought to be an “inherently objective medium of representation”¹² as a result the viewers looking at the imagery from the West would have no doubt that the proper conversion was taking place. The key choices in the photograph, the ones to have the girls standing in front of a Western church with a church leader in a dominant position of authority leads to the photographer making choices to “make known, to confirm, to give testimony to others”¹³ the validity of the missionization and the confirmation that it is successful. The photographs are intended to prove to the west that the missionization has been successful. The girls also stare at the viewer straight on, the viewer is invited to “return the gaze”¹⁴ in a narcissistic identification as if acknowledging that they have also been saved by the church. Another image that generates the same paradigmatic elements as the first two but features the male body is “Group in Front of a new church” by Rev. George Brown. Samoa, 1889 (see figure 3). It generates a similar discourse of uniformity and the disciplined body as well as narrative of lightness and conversion.

¹¹ Ahrens, 280

¹² Hall, Stuart. "Chapter 2 Documentary Expression and Photography." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: SAGE Publications, 1997. 81

¹³ Hall, Stuart. "Chapter 2 Documentary Expression and Photography." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: SAGE Publications, 1997. 85

¹⁴ Burgin, 148.

Reverend George Brown was a pioneer, photographer and missionary. Reverend Brown is known for his frequent documentation of missionary work. This is known as a standard conversion portrait that is frequently depicted in Samoan missionary images and represents the “after” narrative present in the missionary imagery. The image features a large group of men who are all standing outside in front of a Western style Christian church. The men are all wearing white and standing in front of the church both features that are equated with lightness and an element of God. The white is an important Christian color marking the movement from the darker colors of the savage and pre- saved Samoans that came before. The transition into the pure and socially Western acceptable Samoans that have been properly converted to Christianity by Reverend Brown.

The placement in front of the church seems to suggest that the church has become the main social ground for the Samoans. It is placed at the center background of the image. No other element of Samoan life can be seen in the image other than the church and the Samoans that stand before the church. This could suggest that there is a “macro familial sense evoked by the community gathering”¹⁵. The church is not just reflective of the mark of civilization as referenced in the “Students of Paputa Girl’s School” image but rather the macro familial implication states that the Samoan people are living the way of life that the church demands. The Samoans are also not in worship but rather are experiencing the church, another indicator that it has become not just a place to go to but a place to surround life in. They are experiencing the church and Christian values as a completely immersive experience that regulates their every movement, imposing order on the chaos and promoting the dominant hegemonic discourse of the

¹⁵ Ahrens, 281.

time. According to Victor Burgin, images are discursive on their own¹⁶, they generate and reaffirm the power relations. The presentation of the subjects based on what is showable constructs power relations. The photograph is structured around the building the same way the men are to promote the goals the missionaries aim for. The men standing around the church relate to a broader metaphor of missionization and power.

The men are holding umbrellas in the image. While in a contemporary reading the presence of umbrellas may seem strange especially because the sky in the image seems to be mostly shiny and not filled with clouds. However, to a viewer of the image at the time the umbrella would be a symbol of conversion. The items that the Samoans would have previously been holding would have been weapons or other symbols of a life that missionaries wanted the Samoans to leave behind. As a result the Samoans are holding umbrellas as a way to prove to the church that the Samoans are being properly converted and to supply more funding to them. The umbrella, at the time, would have been strongly associated to Western Christian viewers as a mark of Westernization and a civilized identity rather than the imagery that would have been placed before it. The group represents the authority of the west and the hegemonic prevalence of Christianity. The people viewers of the image recognize Christianity and the west, they would understand the symbolic umbrellas coded in the image. The umbrellas are an indication that they have accepted the west as the dominant power structure.

This image most clearly represents the corporeal aspects of the missionized bodies and the uniformity associated with them. The earlier photograph of the Catholic nun with the younger children acts as a way to demonstrate the potential that these young people would have

¹⁶ Burgin, Victor. "Looking at Photographs." In *Thinking Photography*. 1982.

to be properly converted. It was a way to demonstrate to the Christian missions that there was a large group of young people who were capable of being brought into schools and taught the ways of the Christian missions. However, the two photos after demonstrate what happened to them during the missionization process. The photos were taken to intentionally convey the loss of Samoan identity and acted as an arguing point for missionaries, as a way to assert their dominant identity.

At the same time as these images were being taken there was also imagery that evoked different kinds of attitudes towards Samoan identity. The photographic paradigm that emerges in the context of missionary photographs is one that: depicts a before missionization or after missionization narrative. The photographs ground the missionary discourses that are present and the regimes of truth that missionaries perpetuate. This narrative incorporate themes of lightness and darkness, jungle versus architecture, uniformity and a “savage” versus “civilized” dichotomy contribute to the dominant hegemonic discourses and the dominant representational paradigms that are embedded in missionization and missionary imagery. The images of missionary photography were intended to be read as “objective representational images”¹⁷ meaning that they were entirely factual citing the proper conversion of Samoans to Christianity. The discourse of missionization only produced a place for the obedient subject. The missionized Samoans were only allowed to act in the Christian way. Missionary imagery in Samoan was not concerned with silencing what it means to be Samoan but rather muting it. It was an attempt to get Samoans to conform to the ways of life the Christian missionaries were presenting to them. Not all imagery served this function. The hegemonic positions are always under contestation and a second set

¹⁷ Hall, Stuart. "Chapter 2 Documentary Expression and Photography." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: SAGE Publications, 1997. 81

images from the time attempted to redefine the Missionary paradigm that was present in the missionary photographs. Many images produced in the same time period acted as counterclaims to the missionary imagery and worked to re-assert Samoan identity.

The themes that emerged in contrast to the missionary one still fulfilled certain kinds of ideological work. According to Michel Foucault, the discourse produces a place for the subject and as a result produces a place for the subject that rebels the dominant hegemonic ideologies embedded in the discourse, in a circulation of visibility and invisibility¹⁸. It promotes the Samoan regime of truth and ideological construction in contrast to the missionary one working against the main themes of the missionary conversion. At the height of the missionary conversion Samoa was experiencing a kind of tug-of-war for their sovereignty as well as the continued missionization. The emergence of this was a key struggle for Samoan people and as a result there was a push to reassert identity as the indigenous Samoans were in the invisible side of discourse. There was a push for reassessments “of equality, of communality”¹⁹ of the things that made Samoa important. Thus counter-missionary, counter-colonial themes emerged, as an answer to the missionary photographic paradigm. The counter images were not quite paradigmatic but they did represent as drastically different approach to the dominant missionary photographs of the time.

The images that most clearly represent the counter-missionary and counter-colonial paradigm, at least upon initial reading, depicts Samoan King Malietoa Laupepa. Malietoa Laupepa was born in Samoa in the mid 1800s around 1840. This image, “King Malietoa Laupepa

¹⁸ Hall, Stuart. "Chapter 3 From Language to Culture: Linguistics to Semiotics." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: SAGE Publications, 1997. 47.

¹⁹ Hall, Stuart. "Chapter 2 Documentary Expression and Photography." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: SAGE Publications, 1997. 93

poses in formal Samoan death tooth “nifo oti” necklace and “siapo” bark cloth c. 1885-1886 photograph collected by George Handy (See figure 4) depicts him while he is still relatively young. He was known as a devout Christian, and was born significantly after the initial missionization occurred in Samoa. In the image Malietoa Laupepa is wearing a death tooth necklace. These necklaces were made of whale teeth and were incredibly rare and hard to get ahold of as a result of that only chiefs wore them as a mark of high status. In fact, they were forbidden by commoners so much so that there was a punishment of death if commoners were found in possession of one of these items²⁰. This is because the whale tooth necklaces were so rare and valuable that a person could buy almost anything with them.

The other item that the chief is wearing is siapo. Siapo is Samoan barkcloth or tapa. It is known as one of Samoa’s oldest cultural art forms. Siapo is used, often, as a connecting force. It has political and religious ties and has been known as the item that binds “all the Samoan people together”²¹ but literally and physically.

This emphasis on the important status of whale tooth necklaces and the siapo highlights the authority that the chief was still claiming in an effort to retain his Samoan identity. This photo was taken almost 50 years after the initial and major entry point of the Christian missionaries promoting Christian values onto the Samoans. Still, after the attempts at the assimilation and missionization process there was an authoritarian controversy. Samoans struggled to retain their previously established Samoan identity while acknowledging the Christian missions. King Malietoa Laupepa was known as heavily Christian and was deeply

²⁰ Kramer, Augustin. *The Samoa Islands: Material Culture*. University of Hawaii Press, 1994.336.

²¹ Neich, Roger, Mick Pendergrast, and Pfeiffer Krzysztof. *Pacific Tapa*. Honolulu (University of Hawaii Press), 2004. 45

enmeshed in the missionary discourses. King Malietoa Laupepa was heavily disliked King of Samoa partially because of his devout Christian identity that he often placed before his Samoan one. He never had the ability to truly win the undivided support of his people²². He was said to be heavily loyal but “illoyal”²³ for the concerns of bloodshed and turmoil that often surrounded the lives of Samoan kings. This image acted as a way to retain his Samoan identity and potentially assert himself as a prosperous Samoan king.

The image greatly differs from the previous missionization imagery because of several things beyond just the choice of accessories. The image is a portrait style without any other people. It is known that Malietoa had traditional Samoan Tatau on his body. Tatau is intentionally covered as it was known that the Christian missionaries were against tatau. The tatau is replaced by the siapo which while an important indication of status it would have been well perceived if King Malietoa also had further markers of his Samoan identity. It is important to note that these markers of Samoan identity, that of the Samoan tooth necklace and the siapo would not have been read easily by a Western audience. The key clothing pieces are part of a dense lexicon, or personal vocabulary, that would have only been read able to be read by those that already knew what they meant; the Samoans. Given that, this image has the potential more to be read as an image that helps perpetuate the Samoan ideals and values rather than one that is promoting other motifs. It is present in the calculated image production of identity. Just like the missionary images that attempt to ground the missionary discourses, this image attempts to ground Samoan identity and reassert its meaning and importance against the wave of missionary activity. This image, despite Laupepa’s devout Christianity, appears as a counter image to the

²² Ide, Henry C. "The Imbroglio in Samoa." *The North American Review* 168, no. 511 (1899): 679-93.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25119201>, 680

²³ Ide, 681

missionary images previously established. However, this image was also collected by George Handy, a collector, an ambassador to the United States and a Christian²⁴. It was collected, likely, from an anthropological perspective to have a recording of the Samoan people before they were colonized. The devout Christianity of the king creates a complex interaction between indigeneity and Christianity. Despite its outward attempts to promote Samoan identity from a historical perspective it reminds the viewer of the Christian and anthropological associations of the King Malietoa Luapepa and George Handy, the ambassador that collected it. "Woman in Wraparound Siapo Dress", photograph by Thomas Andrew c. 1890 (see figure 5) is another image that simultaneously works to submit the hegemonic regime of missionary and colonial conventions but is also implicit in them.

The image taken by Thomas Andrew in the late 1800s. Thomas Andrew was a New Zealand photographer who took photographs in Samoa from 1891 to 1939²⁵ during the time when both Reverend George Brown and George Handy were in Samoa. This was a particularly tumultuous time in politics for Samoa because of the landscape of the period. During this time the United States, Britain and Germany were all fighting for control over Samoa. These political turmoils forced members of the Samoan chieftains to take particular and decisive action as a way to choose sides during the conflict. Andrew is known mostly for his portraiture but also for his just portrayal of the Samoan people. He photographed several images of the Samoan people in

²⁴ "George Handy Bates Dead." The New York Times, November 1, 1916. p. 11.

²⁵ "Picturing Samoa: Photographs by Thomas Andrews." Loading... | Collections Online - Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Accessed March 07, 2018. <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/topic/3915>.

daily life and also classic landscape imagery of Samoa²⁶, from an anthropological gaze of recording.

In the image a young Samoan woman is posing for a portrait. The image background is a plain blank canvas perhaps implying that the image in front of the background, the woman, is significantly more important. She is seated upright and shading and highlighting emphasizes her facial features with her hair up and with a flower petal headband. She is wearing a white shell teeth lei around her neck and traditional Samoan Siapo across one shoulder of her body. The woman is also gazing across the viewer looking slightly to the viewer's right. Her gaze conveys one of a potentially inquisitive nature but also of ease.

The portraits are said "convey an ease"²⁷ about the relationships between the subject and Andrew. The images convey important perceptions about the gender balances of the time and bring awareness about the public and private spaces that have been occupied by women. The image presents an alternative view about the colonial standard of the oversexualized or the missionary standard of the overly covered woman. Most images of women presented a completely different viewpoint than Andrew does. The gaze of the photographer places the woman in a position where she is given dignity but also one where the viewer is interested in knowing what she is wearing and what makes her Samoan from a slightly more anthropological gaze. What makes this image unique is the choice to present the young woman as not exoticized by also not saved by the Christian mission. There have been many tendencies by previous portraiture to present the women of Samoa as overly exoticized. Many portraits of women

²⁶ "Picturing Samoa: Photographs by Thomas Andrews." Loading... | Collections Online - Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Accessed March 07, 2018. <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/topic/3915>.

²⁷ Mataia-Milo, Sau'i'a Louise (2014) Picturing Sāmoa: photographs by Thomas Andrew, *The Journal of Pacific History*, 49:3, 354-356, DOI: [10.1080/00223344.2014.953318](https://doi.org/10.1080/00223344.2014.953318). 355.

feature exposed breasts or overly sexual clothing choices in combination with an exotic but fake background, one that is attempting to present these women in an othered state above all else. However, this image rejects those stereotypes and works against a voyeuristic gaze. It works to present counter-colonial image making. Andrew is often heralded for his work to not sexually exploit women in the imagery he presents. Andrew emphasized that the imagery of the colonized woman, “need not be sexually exploitative”²⁸ as seen in so many images but the images can also not feature the woman as entirely covered or ashamed of her state as was an ideal placed upon by the missionary system.

The imagery and lighting that these women were given could be argued gives them the same lighting that the missionary white women were given over the Samoans. The overhead lighting, emphasis on facial features and almost hellenistic glow that were placed on the woman gives her an air of “moral inviolability”²⁹ a feature that was often presented to the Victorian women’s portraiture of the time and was significantly less frequently placed upon Samoan imagery. It is said that particularly in Samoa male photographers often had trouble getting women to disrobe³⁰, they did not want to take part in the imagery of the exoticized woman. However, the woman is still allowed to wear her own clothing which was iconic of the Samoa and what it means to be Samoan. In this complex interchange between authority and identity the woman in the image is at once allowed to be herself and be important This highlights the important political turmoil of the time as between the 1890s and 1930s in Samoa Samoans were fighting for their own political autonomy something that is not as easily read in the missionary photographs. The woman in the image is given autonomy and identity and important relationship

²⁸ Dale, Leigh, and Simon Ryan. *The body in the library*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998. 132

²⁹ Dale, Leigh, and Simon Ryan. 132

³⁰ Dale, Leigh, and Simon Ryan. 131

that women in that time often did not experience. The image is one that does not present her as just another object for conversion that is often seen in missionary photographs but something so much more than that. However, Andrew's choice not to oversexualize the Samoan woman does not negate his implications as a white male photographer. The camera attempts to produce "visual facts or documents"³¹ and in the acknowledgement of that attempt of photography the image becomes significantly more anthropological than identity based. The image then has the potential to be seen as a "human document"³² with an anthropological basis. The autonomous nature of the image is implicit in the broader hegemonic ideology because Andrew is a white male producing imagery of an "othered" female if only because the image is taken by a white Christian male which makes it inherently implicit in the broader hegemonic ideals of the missionization of Samoa. Regardless of the attempts to be less bias, the history of the exoticization of women is implicit in the image. The image cannot be interpreted without acknowledging the history from which it came.

The final image, taken by Thomas Andrew of Lauaki Namulau'ulu Mamoe c. 1900 (See figure 6) who was an important tulafale or orator chief of Samoa, acknowledges a colonial and missionary history. Orator chiefs acted as verbal histories for Samoa and their most important legends. They were considered to be the second in command of the chiefs and often acted as their voices for the chiefdom. His title of Namualau'ulu gave him one of the most important orator titles of Samoa. Laukai was famous throughout the country. He was known for "his

³¹ Hall, Stuart. "Chapter 2 Documentary Expression and Photography." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: SAGE Publications, 1997. 83.

³² Hall, Stuart. "Chapter 2 Documentary Expression and Photography." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: SAGE Publications, 1997. 83.

mastery of history and legend”³³ he was said to have great prowess in war and be able to speak incredibly and navigate political situations with ferocity and consciousness. Lauakai was an important leader in the political movement for Samoans against the colonization of Samoa by Germany. In 1909 because of his political resistance Lauakai was exiled by the Germans to the Mariana Islands³⁴. Years later he was released from exiled but died on the ship ride back to Samoa. The process of exile and removal highlights the power of the colonizers and missionaries to remove that which does not benefit their view of what society should look like.

In the image Lauakai is wearing traditional Siapo a standard and continuous mark of Samoan identity. In his left hand he is also holding a traditional Samoan flywhisk. The flywhisk is an important symbol of the status of the Orator chief. The flywhisk is seen in this image almost connected to the orator staff³⁵. However, in reality they are two separate objects. The flywhisk is an object made of coconut hair. It is typically thrown over the shoulder of the orator chief or placed in one hand while on the other hand is the staff. The staff is known as the (to’oto’o) and is an important staff for the orators³⁶. It gives people the authority to talk in ceremony. These two objects are strongly associated with the wisdom that is also associated with the figure. They are important because they are embedded in the ideals that are associated with people like Lauakai and the importance that they have on the nation of Samoa. In this image Lauakai has the flywhisk and the staff in one hand and is using his other hand to point to something. The flywhisk and the other symbolic elements of this image are part of a large

³³ Davidson, J.W. 'Lauaki Namulau'ulu Mamoe, a traditionalist in Samoan Politics', in Davidson, J.W., and Scarr, D.A., (ed) Pacific Island Portraits, pp.267-299. Australian National University Press. Canberra, 1970. 267.

³⁴ "Lauaki Namulau'ulu Mamoe." Loading... | Collections Online - Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Accessed March 07, 2018. <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/211364>.

³⁵ Holmes, Lowell D. "Samoan Oratory." *The Journal of American Folklore* 82, no. 326 (1969): 342-52. doi:10.2307/539779, 351

³⁶ Holmes, 350

lexicon that Samoans reading the image would understand. Orators and the practice of oratory in Samoa is known specifically because of its focus on reciprocity. When oratory is done in Samoa it is done to provide a unifying bond between “village and village, family and family”³⁷ it often acts as a way to heal when something was done that was wrong. It is the essence of reciprocity and the act of providing a kind of gift. It is incredibly important and impactful that Andrew chose to take a picture of Laukai Namulau’ulu Mamoe because as the orator they are the voice of the community. When missionary images were taken of the Samoan people the image did not place the role of the person in the community in the image. According to Victor Burgin, photography intends to treat the viewer to “an interminable rhetoric of humanity”³⁸ including everything that humanity comes with: joy and sorrow. When a viewer looks at an image by a missionary they are completely wiped of all knowledge that would be associated with the person. It is the complex interplay of discourses that are at war with each other. The image attempts to counteract the missionary photography paradigm by presenting a “noble savage” Pacific Island figure, one that is shrouded in light. However, in the very act of the photograph being taken by a white Christian man the image, despite its best attempts, is implicit in the potentially negative Western constructions of views of the image. In Reverend George Brown’s images of missionary men it is unknown to the viewer the different roles that each man played in their community. However, this image and others like it by Andrew gives the person sitting for the image the voice to make statements about their own country and the way they view it. However that voice is partially silenced by Andrew. The photographer has as much of voice as the sitter, the photographer is implicit in the colonial and missionary discourses.

³⁷ Holmes, 351.

³⁸ Burgin, 49

This image has several of the similar standards of Andrew photography. The sitter appears to be at ease with the camera and the photographer. There is a blank background and the sitter is wearing traditional Samoan clothing as a mark of his own identity. The blank background also has the potential to mark the identity as new and on the verge of developing into something different and potentially something better. These images are typical of counter-colonial and counter missionary image making. The images allow the sitter to have an active choice in the production of their own identity. They succeed in establishing counterclaims to the dominant discourses of the time, in beginning a different conversation. However, colonization is embedded in Christianity. Thomas Andrew is a product of both of those events and as a result, so is Mamoe. Even the resistance of the counter-missionary and counter-colonial power structures were still embedded in the dominant hegemonic frame because the images were taken by the White male photographer and would ultimately end up in the same place as the group previously, being studied by white anthropologists.

Samoa is a country that experienced an important political turning point at the end of the 19th century. The country was flooded with Christian missionary activity and experienced a conversion to a new way of thought. Additionally, the country was experiencing a fight between three countries all of which were fighting for colonial control of the area. The resulting photos created a paradigm in which Western audiences in an effort to portray Samoans as people that were stripped of their identity and given a completely new one that would fit with the Western vision. The counter-colonial and counter- missionary imagery that acted as rebuff to missionary imagery was still implicit in the Western paradigms because the photography is a product of white men. The imagery reflects the important political position of the time. The photographs

that exist of Samoans placing importance on their own identity however, they were made in collaboration with the white Christian men that helped them take the photographs. The counter-colonial and counter-missionary photography is embedded in the colonial and missionary discourses of the time. The counter-missionary and counter-colonial photographs do not greatly succeed or fail in their attempts to provide an alternative vision to the status quo. The images reflect the regimes of truth that are battling against each other when the Samoans are fighting for the maintenance of their identity through the use of photography but also would not have photography and records without the missionaries. The combinations of these identities create an important conversation. Their attempts to mark identity may have been dulled by the anthropological and archival perspective but they were not silenced. The marks of identity in all things exist even under the dominant power structures as these photographs do.

Index:



Figure 1. “Missionary Sister poses with children” Samoa, c. 1900. Photographer unknown.

<http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll123/id/49159/rec/22>



Figure 2. “Students of Papauta Girl’s School” Samoa, c. 1897. Photographer unknown.

<http://cdm15799.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15799coll123/id/47858>



Figure 3. “Group in Front of a New Church” Samoa, c. 1889. Photograph by Reverend George Brown.

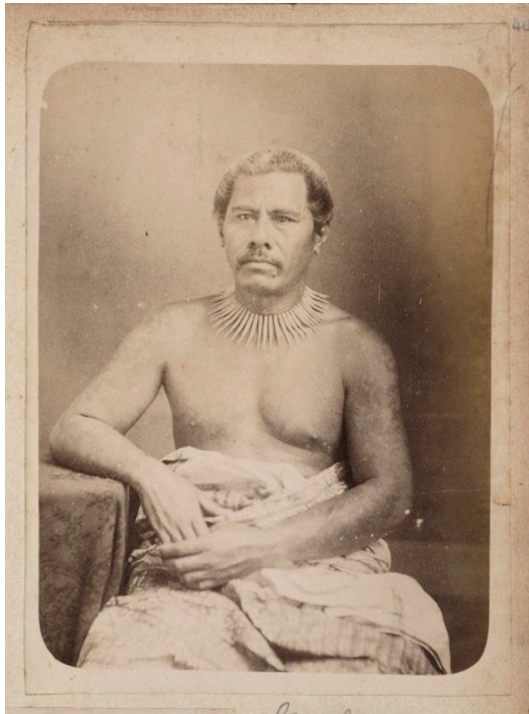


Figure 4. “King Malietoa Laupepa poses in formal Samoan death tooth “nifo oti” and “siapo” bark cloth” Samoa, c. 1885- 1886. Photographer Unknown.

<https://natlib.govt.nz/blog/posts/telling-samoa-s-stories>



Figure 5. “Woman in Wraparound Siapo Dress” Samoa, c 1890. Photograph by Thomas Andrew

<https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/211564>



Figure 6. “Lauaki Namulau’ulu Mamoe” Samoa, c. 1900. Photograph by Thomas Andrew

<https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/211364>

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