

SOURCES OF TONGAN HISTORY

A
COLLECTION OF DOCUMENTS
EXTRACTS AND CONTEMPORARY
OPINIONS IN TONGAN
POLITICAL HISTORY
1616 - 1900.

Compiled and arranged by **H. G. Cummins.**

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A NOTE TO STUDENTS

This collection of Documents and Extracts has been prepared to provide primary source material for a section of the Form 4 "History of Australia and the Pacific" course at Tupou High School. In previous years the "Pacific" content has included a study of Asian and South East Asian countries, mainly because the course was designed for Australian students (and we follow an Australian syllabus), but also because books are freely available on the history of these countries. It was felt, however, that a study of some aspects of Tongan history may be more relevant and interesting to students in Tonga. This collection has been made to allow us to experiment with a Tongan segment in the "Pacific" section of the course.

A documentary approach was decided upon for a number of reasons. First of all, and perhaps most importantly, documents are the basis of history, the raw material from which history is written, and to really appreciate history we must be familiar with documents and be able to use them in answering questions and in solving historical problems. Another reason for choosing a documentary approach is that text books on Tongan history are either non-existent or virtually impossible to procure. In fact Dr Wood's little book "History and Geography of Tonga" and James Stuart Ramsay's translation of Bishop Blanc's articles in Taumu'a Lelei (which Ramsay had printed in a little booklet called "History of Tonga or Friendly Islands") are the only published histories of Tonga. Both of these little books were published in the 1930's and have been out of print for nearly 30 years. A reprint of Dr Wood's book is now available and the documents will allow us to see the sources that lie behind many of chapters in that book. A third reason for choosing a documentary approach is that the syllabus prescriptions for Form 5 and 6 History courses, set down by the Victorian Universities and Schools Examination Board, stress the importance of a thorough acquaintance with documents and their use. The Examiners report for Form 5 .British History (1969) commented that the successful student would be the one who had had "wide experience" in the "intensive use of documentary material". The Form 6 Australian History prescriptions point out that the final examination includes "a compulsory short answer section . . . based on the study of documents" and to which one quarter of the total marks for the examination will be allotted. Thus the examiner's see senior history as involving extensive use of documentary material. Finally, history takes on a new interest as we read eyewitness accounts by people in their words. Documents will help to bring history alive for us.

The collection traces the Political and Constitutional history of Tonga from 1616 to the end of the 19th century. The early visits of the explorers were spasmodic and widely spaced in time - about 150 years separated the visits of Schouten and Lemaire and Captain Cook, with only Tasman and Wallis in between.

The journals of these explorers are the written sources that we have available to us for this first section. George Vason, one of the first London Missionary society missionaries, and William Mariner, a survivor of the Port au Prince, provide a great deal of detail about the period 1797-1810, a time of political unrest and civil war. From the 1820's to the end of the century, political and constitutional developments were strongly influenced by the Wesleyan

Methodist missionaries, the new religion, and Taufa'ahau, the King of Ha'apai who became "the Father of modern Tonga". These influences can be seen as we trace the rise of Taufa'ahau to become the recognized ruler of all Tonga, and as we see the development of codes of law and finally a Constitution. The writings of missionaries both Wesleyan and Catholic form an important source (and in some cases perhaps the only source) for the period commencing with the establishment of the Wesleyan mission in 1822, and its re-establishment in 1826, up to the deportation of Mr Baker in 1890. After the removal of Mr Baker, direct missionary influence came to an end and Britain then played a very significant role in Tongan affairs. This began with the appointment of a British adviser, Basil Thomson, in 1890, and culminated in Tupou 11 surrendering certain areas of Tongan sovereignty to Britain, particularly Foreign affairs. Tonga's agreement to give up these aspects of independence was formalized in what was called "The Treaty of Friendship" of 1900.

The Tongan History section of the course will begin with asking questions and defining problems. These questions and problems will encourage us to read, to think, to discuss, and to ask more questions. In short, the problems and questions will encourage us to do some research. Research will lead us to suggest possible answers to our questions, and solutions to our historical problems. Once this stage has been reached we will want to support our suggested answers, or solutions, by bringing together all the relevant evidence we can find. Finally, when we have amassed all this evidence, we will be able to state simply and precisely, the conclusions that we have reached. This process - "Problem-Research-Hypothesis-Evidence-Conclusion" - will, we hope be quite exciting and challenging, and it will help us to understand more fully what history is, and what historians are required to do. Incidentally, the final outcome of the process will be that we have written, for ourselves, some of the political and constitutional history of Tonga.

A comment about the sources.

You will notice that the documents and extracts are varied, and have been obtained from a number of different places. There are extracts from diaries, Journals of explorers, letters of Kings and Prime Ministers, private letters, official government publication, letters to Newspapers and Magazines, Newspaper articles, Acts of Parliaments, Official Proclamations, contemporary writings (books), Magazine articles, Extracts form Minute Books, Printed pamphlets, Petitions, Consular and High Commission Despatches, Sworn Affidavits, Myths and Legends, Treaties and Agreements, etc.

Copies of these documents and extracts have been obtained from the Mitchell Library, Sydney; The Archives of the Western Pacific High Commission Suva; The National Archives of Fiji, Suva; The Archives of Hawaii, Honolulu; The National Archives of New Zealand; The Library of the General Assembly; The State Library of Victoria; The Archives of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, The Palace Records office, Nuku'alofa. The copies from the overseas sources have been obtained on microfilm or as 'one-off' copies. Much of this material has been in manuscript and has had to be transcribed first before typing was possible. Original spelling and punctuation has been retained in almost every case.

This collection of documents and extracts is simply "a collection", meaning that there are huge amounts of documentary material that could have been included but which, for reasons of space, have not been included. Perhaps as we use this book, we will find significant gaps, and we will want to search for and find documents or extracts to fill those gaps. In this respect the collection is a "working edition", to be added to or subtracted from as we put the collection to work in our study of Political and Constitutional history. As it stands however, it will give us a starting point in our experiment in Tongan history.

H. G. Cummins,

Tupou High School,

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