

## POLYNESIAN CHRONOLOGY & SAMOAN TEMPLE WORK

By Thomas A. Stokoe

For centuries written records among the Polynesians throughout the Pacific Ocean was non-existent due to absence of an alphabet or structured character symbolization. Like the storytellers of other ethnic groups throughout the world, Polynesian oral historians committed to memory important events, facts, customs, legends, lineage and memorabilia forming oral records that were passed down from generation to generation. Exactitude existed as well as variance with the passing of information from one oral historian to another over the centuries.

With the Age of Exploration and discovery of new lands, the Caucasian arrival in the Pacific islands introduced an alphabet enabling written records in the languages of the Polynesians. Thus the transfer of oral records to written record format was made possible.

The Caucasians also introduced Christianity. Missionaries arrived representing various Christian denominations: Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational, Seven Day Adventist, Jehovah's Witnesses, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and others. Church membership records were kept with gender, date of birth, date of christening, marriage date, death date, place of death, date of burial, place of burial, parents, children and lineage.

However, the oral history prior to the arrival of the Caucasian and Christianity, did not always specify EXACT dates for the aforementioned. Consequently, contemporary historians, researchers, and family members have affixed APPROXIMATE dates.

Inconsistency in Samoan recorded chronology is rampant and the passage of some genealogical lines and their dates illogical. Example: A male born in 1500 marries a woman born in 1590 who bares her first child in 1682, her second in 1540, and her third in 1721. So "Church Family Research and Temple Headquarters" is constantly issuing red flags: (1) child born beyond the mother's child bearing years (2) child born by father at age ten (3) husband born in 1600 but married in 1522 (4) husband born in 1750 died in 1650, buried in 1594 (5) wife born in 1660 marries in 1680 to husband born in 1678. There cannot be a 2 year old husband. (6) child born 35 years before his father's birth (7) daughter born after the death of both parents etc.

This Samoan chronology debacle can drive a researcher up a wall and the "catch 22" is it blocks the performance of ordinance work for ancestors affected. Lines are chronologically bloated with inconsistency. Resolving chronological inconsistency through approximate date adjustment, frees the ordinance work for some ancestors to be performed. The adjustment may work for immediate ancestors in a line, but the dates of descendants and their offspring may be illogical. The same may apply to ancestors and their predecessors going back in history. It's an ongoing battle.

When Samoan ordinance work is reserved or completed for a remote, intermediate or direct relative, there is a contemporary demanding relative some where who questions the rescuer: “Who are you? Are you related to John Doe? What is your connection to him? Why have you changed his birth date? Are you related to my family? Prove your connection to us.” The burden of relative proof becomes the priority and focus of the contemporary demanding relative, not the fact that the ordinance work can now be done, or the work is now in progress, or

the ordinance work for the ancestor has been completed, or ancestors rescued are no longer in limbo, or the path to eternal progression has been opened.

Defense of the rescuing action may take extensive narrative and intricate schematics depicting lineage relationships of the rescuer to the questioning contemporary descendant. This can be a laborious and time consuming undertaking Suffice it to say, the work has been done or is now in progress.

There are multiple Samoan computer entries that are flawed chronologically, entered incorrectly, and only partially completed. In some cases where duplication exist, merging is possible. Through corrective adjustment as needed, ordinance work for such entries can be initiated, advanced, and completed thus “hastening the work of salvation,” a Church major theme. A comparable theme is “Rescue my sheep.”

As encouragement to attend the temple and do temple work for the dead is advocated at General Conference, stake conferences and ward conferences, obedience to the request is a privilege and rewarding endeavor. May our temple diligence be consistent and enduring, and especially rewarding to those beyond the veil.

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