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EDITED BY KATIE PICKLES AND CATHARINE COLEBORNE

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CHAPTER SEVEN

From Sudan to Sāmoa: imperial legacies and cultures in New Zealand’s rule over the Mandated Territory of Western Samoa

Patricia O’Brien

On 26 December 1898, British forces were under pressure on a small sand and shingle island in the Blue Nile. Known as the Battle of Rosaires, this attack was one of the last actions in Britain’s fight to subdue the long-standing Sudanese insurrection against the British-backed Egyptian occupation.1 In the intense fighting, machine guns and several British companies tried to dislodge ‘fanatical’ dervishes who had taken refuge on the island [see Figure 7.1]. The intense fighting killed many; others drowned swimming the Nile.2 The brunt of British casualties were taken by the Xīt Soudanese, commanded by Major Charles Fergusson, who was ‘severely’ wounded and mentioned five times in dispatches for his heroism in the battle.3 For Fergusson, the Sudan left an indelible mark. It became the lens through which he refracted imperial polemics three decades after the Battle of Rosaires, when he presided over another insurrection against imperial rule, this time in the Pacific.

After the Sudan, Fergusson’s military career took him to Ulster and then on to the Western Front during the First World War. His 1924–30 appointment as Governor-General of New Zealand capped off a distinguished military and imperial career [see Figure 7.2]. Both his father, Sir James Fergusson (1873–74) and his father-in-law, Lorc Glasgow (1892–97) had served as New Zealand governors.4 The first years of his term were relatively uneventful: he travelled extensively around New Zealand and also took in a tour of ‘Greater New Zealand’—its island dependencies—in May 1926, of which he wrote that the ‘reception accorded me by residents and natives alike was most satisfactory’.5 He wrote effusively of Western Samoa, lavishing praise on General George Spafford Richardson: a ‘born administrator of native races, and a man of high ideals, of wide vision of the highest order’, a man who had achieved ‘extraordinary success’.6 Richardson’s devotion to the Sāmoans as shown in Figure 7.3 was likened to that of a father
to his children. This message was encapsulated in a widely distributed photograph, ca. 1925, of the administrator holding the hand of a young Sāmoan girl who gazes up at him, as does a little boy who is supposedly hoisting the Union Jack. The photograph attempted to visually represent [albeit awkwardly] the paternalism embedded in New Zealand's Sāmoan colonial enterprise.

Yet Fergusson had to concede that Richardson's 'great determination' had not won over everyone. There were detractors among the European community, people who had 'battened on the natives in the past and have looked at Sāmoa and its people from the point of view of exploitation and their own enrichment', and who were also disgruntled by the local prohibition on alcohol. Without fully realising it, Fergusson had identified the nascent anti-colonial movement that would erupt six months later, drawing him, New Zealand, and Britain into another imperial trouble zone: the Mandated Territory of Western Sāmoa.

Fergusson played a critical and behind-the-scenes role in the Sāmoan troubles until his term ended in January 1930. Unlike his
father, Sir Charles's vice-regal duties were supposed to be confined to 'ceremony, constitution and community.' New Zealand's 1907 shift from colonial to dominion status curbed vice-regal powers. Ferguson was to act as the line of communication between New Zealand and British governments, reporting on, but not interfering with, domestic political affairs that included governing Samoa. Yet New Zealand's continuing deference to Britain, the office of Governor-General, Ferguson's friendships with key personalities in the New Zealand government, and his extensive imperial experience – especially in the Sudan – emboldened Ferguson to overstep the limits of his role on numerous occasions.

In governing all its Pacific dependencies, New Zealand was an empire within an empire, but with Samoa there was the additional layer of imperial oversight in the form of the League of Nations' Mandates Commission (PMC). This chapter tracks the role Ferguson played in exerting British influence from its imperial centre to its colonial peripheries: to New Zealand and then to Samoa. It also shows how he and the New Zealand government managed British rule of Samoa with the PMC, and the Governor-General's consistent advocacy for the maintenance of imperial prestige in Samoa through the use of violence.

Between 1926 and 1930, international opinion about New Zealand's execution of its imperial duties plummeted, almost entirely as a result of its handling of the Samoan troubles. In 1930, the Chicago Tribune charged New Zealand with being 'unjust' and 'roughly handling' Samoans, and this from a nation 'supposed to represent the best grade of British emigration'. Only four years earlier, at the Imperial Conference held in London in October 1926, Australian Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce had asserted that New Zealand's 'eighty years of previous experience in governing Polynesians' had served them well in their rule over Samoa. Unlike South Africa and Australia, which governed the Mandated Territories of South West Africa and New Guinea respectively, New Zealand had received less negative attention for its rule over Samoa. Australia had consistently attracted negative international attention for its conduct towards New Guinea, and towards its own Aboriginal peoples.

The seemingly abrupt change in opinion about New Zealand's imperial capabilities ignored its longer troublesome history in the Pacific, not least of which was the 1918 influenza epidemic that had killed over 20 per cent of Samoa's population. Many Samoans held New Zealand accountable for this calamity and afterwards grew increasingly critical of its administration. Within months of Bruce's flattering views, resistance erupted in Samoa. This followed the formation, in March 1927, of the Samoan League, known as the Mau, which resulted from two meetings held on 15 October and 12 November 1925, when Samoans and Europeans met in Apia to discuss concerns about General Richardson's administration. Richardson tried to have the second meeting stopped. While noting that 'freedom of speech and honest criticism of the Government are not barred in any way; they are British privileges to which no exception can be taken', he considered that Samoans were being drawn into political affairs that concerned only Europeans and this was 'disturbing the peace, order and good government of the Territory'. He wanted Samoan and European affairs to be separate; ignoring this directive would be considered an act of defiance. Despite his strong disapproval, the meeting continued and organisers asked, 'can the interests of Samoans and Europeans ... be separated, or are they identical?'

Richardson reacted to this perceived insubordination by issuing a swathe of dismissal orders to Samoans who participated in the meeting. He also began threatening the Europeans involved with exile from Samoa, though this would first require the New Zealand Parliament to amend the 1921 Samoa Act that was the legal foundation
of New Zealand’s Samoan administration. Richardson’s harsh response prompted the formation of the Mau, which adopted non-violent civil disobedience, petitioning and publicity as their main tactics.16

Parliamentarians confronted Samoan resistance during debates in June and July 1927 as they debated legalising exile from Samoa without trial by amending the Samoa Act. Parliamentary speeches covered a range of routine subjects as well as stirring and passionate ones, such as British Empire, race, and New Zealand history.17 Many parliamentarians clung to the government line, encapsulated by Minister for External Affairs William Nosworthy’s statement, ‘I can stand in this house and say confidently that there is nothing wrong with the Samoa Administration’.18 Prime Minister Gordon Coates argued that exile and banishment without trial were standard powers in ‘the United States of America, France, Germany, Spain and then the British countries of South Africa, Australia, India and Egypt’.19 Other MPs strenuously disagreed with the government’s depiction of New Zealand’s Samoan administration. In the words of Opposition leader and ardent supporter of the Samoan cause, Harry Holland:

Has it come to this: that whoever dares to criticize the Administration of Samoa is to be met with a sentence of deportation? This is not to the credit of New Zealand: it constitutes an outrage upon every principle of British liberty, and is the reason to-day why there is so much resentment throughout New Zealand and other countries because of what we are doing in Samoa.20

Some parliamentarians remembered with unease New Zealand’s history of exiling Māori leaders without trial. The turbulent and violent history surrounding Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki was a case in point, including his exile without trial to the Chatham Islands in 1866, his 1868 escape back to New Zealand, and his prosecution of a draining war that lasted four years. This was in the minds of Holland and his fellow members William Lyman, Edwin Howard, Peter Fraser, and Sir Maui Pōmare.

Both Howard and Pōmare also recalled the bloody consequences for Taranaki Māori resistance.21 Looking back right through to the Native wars we have had ... especially the trouble at the foot of Mount Egmont, we can trace it all back to bad mistakes in administration’, Edwin Howard told Parliament on 19 July 1927.22 In 1881 a military attack on the non-violent community of Parihaka in Taranaki had resulted in the capture of the community’s leaders, Te Whiti O Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi, their exile to the South Island, and then the extensive confiscation of Māori lands. As well as providing a salient lesson on exile without trial, Parihaka was also a precedent for non-violent resistance, a philosophy and anti-imperial tactic the Samoan

NEW ZEALAND’S RULE OVER WESTERN SAMOA

Mau would follow.23 Despite these evocations of New Zealand’s troubled colonial past, Parliament did amend the Samoa Act to make exile from Samoa without trial lawful.

The government refused to acknowledge any genuine grievances against its administration. When Sir James Parr, New Zealand’s High Commissioner to London, addressed the FMC in June 1928, following the 1927 petition, he stated that the ‘Mau of present-day is quite a recent matter. Before the natives had been drawn into consultations and public meetings with the whites, the Samoans had had no idea whatever of raising the demand for self-government’.24 Parr’s portrayal of the sudden emergence of the Mau and calls for ‘Samoan for Samoans’ was misinformed and misleading. Samoans had been protesting colonial rule since 1908, when the German governor put down an armed revolt in Samoa by exiling its leaders to Saipan in the Mariana Islands. (Germany governed Samoa from 1900, until New Zealand’s military occupation in 1914.) Parliamentarians were well aware of this event, which they took as a legitimate precedent for exile from Samoa without trial.25 The 1908 uprising had its origins in the erosion of Samoan authority and the imposition of taxes: their demands were for greater Samoan autonomy. Europeans, too, wanted self-government: as they put it in a 1910 petition sent to the Reichstag, their ‘chief desire’ was to have ‘those who pay the rates’ also ‘control the expenditure’.26

After 1918, and with a heightened sense of grievance following the influenza epidemic, Samoans continued to press New Zealand for self-government. Yet the 1921 Samoa Act ignored these aspirations and made ‘no provision of any right of the people of Samoa to have a voice in the government of the country’. In 1923 the legislation was amended to allow for the election of three ‘Europeans’ to the Legislative Council, who would serve with six appointees.27 New Zealand adopted the German model of creating a Fono of Faipule – an advisory body of Samoan chiefs – but this disrupted Samoan systems of power and became a leading cause of discontent.28 There were also economic dimensions to the friction. Samoans were engaged in a boycott of European food and goods, which had escalated in price, while values for local products remained low.29 In 1922 Richardson’s predecessor, Administrator R. W. Tate, signed the Samoan Offenders Ordinance, which aimed to control ‘certain Samoan customs’. Many Samoans saw this ordinance as ‘vicious’ as it permitted ‘a sequence of banishments and degradations without trial of sacred and high Chiefs’.30 When Richardson became administrator in 1923, he faced an already tense situation. By applying the ordinance in more egregious ways and exacerbating other tensions, he inflamed the discontent that culminated in the formation, or more accurately, the reformation of the Mau in early 1927.
NEW ZEALAND'S PACIFIC EMPIRE


Initially New Zealand linked the emergence of the Mau to Germany's re-entry into international affairs. In September 1926 Germany joined the League of Nations, raising fears that it intended to regain its former colonies. New Zealand authorities felt quite certain the Mau was a German plot to 'discredit New Zealand in the opinion of the world' and so support the demand for the transfer of the Mandate for Western Samoa from His Majesty the King in his right of government of this Dominion back to Germany'. A proposed visit to Sāmoa and other ex-German Pacific colonies by the former governor, Dr Erich Schultz, and other officials in April 1927 amplified these fears. The New Zealand Government also explained the Mau as a plot by self-interested and greedy Europeans. One of these 'Europeans', who maintained he was 'Sāmoan by birth, blood and sentiment', was Ta'isi O. F. Nelson, depicted in Figure 7.4. New Zealand consistently singled him out as the eminence grise of the Mau.

Ta'isi was Sāmoa's richest man, who owned forty-five trading stations and over one hundred copra sheds. From 1924 he became one of the three elected members of the advisory Legislative Council. Richardson held him in the highest esteem, claiming him as a friend, seeking his counsel and declaring in September 1926: 'I should be quite prepared to introduce him with confidence to any society in any part of the world to fitly represent yourselves.' After Ta'isi chaired the two public meetings in late 1926, however, Richardson's admiration evaporated. In 1927 Ta'isi became chairman of the Citizens' Committee - the 'European' branch of the Mau - and drove the international campaign to highlight New Zealand's maladministration. But the Mau constituted much more than Ta'isi, although New Zealand refused to see it. When the great majority of Sāmoans allied themselves with the Mau, New Zealand officials accounted for this by assuming that 'Natives in the movement are Nelson's dupes' or, as Richardson would phrase it, 'so simple are the minds of the Natives ... they can be led by the nose to a leg of beef - and be galled by the wily half caste with his glib tongue in the vernacular'.

That Ta'isi had German relatives by marriage, 'one of whom fought for Germany in the Great War', had entertained Germans, and was supported by them in Legislative Council elections, seemed conclusive evidence that further condemned him. But stopping the German visit in 1927 did not quell the Mau and this conspiracy theory had to be abandoned. In July of that year William Nosworthy drafted an angry letter to Ta'isi, charging the Mau with attracting 'worldwide attention' that threatened New Zealand's reputation.

There was intense discussion in New Zealand about how to combat the Mau's non-violent resistance and civil disobedience tactics. Force, the traditional method of dealing with indigenous resistance, was not as easily applied in the face of such a stance. The League of Nations added more complexity to this question of combating non-violent resistance. Officially the PMC made ambiguous statements on this issue and New Zealand was deferential to the PMC's position on the use of force. There were competing and confused sovereignties over Sāmoa, between New Zealand as a depersonalised power to Britain and the unclear role of the PMC. Did New Zealand, Britain, or the PMC have the greatest authority over Sāmoa? The Mau exploited these unclear jurisdictions. They also provided a platform for the Governor-General.

In his advice to the New Zealand government about the Sāmoa protest, Ferguson drew on his imperial experience. He noted that both Sāmoa and the Sudan were hampered by the 'emancipating effect' of climate. Their problems, he saw as 'similar': both had 'a large native race ruled by a handful of Europeans, mainly by moral force'. Ferguson also believed that the 'native mind' had universal characteristics, regardless of geography: it 'never responds to nor appreciates conciliation', which 'is invariably interpreted as weakness'. His advocacy
of ‘firm’ colonial action was a vital part of the growing call, within the New Zealand government, the League of Nations and Britain, from early 1928, to use force against the Mau.

Fergusson began airing his views on Sāmoa in December 1927 to his trusted confídant, Sir Francis Bell, leader of the Legislative Council and conservative powerbroker. ‘I am doing a most improper thing I suppose in writing to you, but you are an old friend and advisor and I think I may do it safely,’ Fergusson was ‘worried about Samoa and the Prime Minister’s attitude about it’. He feared that Coates did not fully trust and support Richardson, even though the latter had been exonerated by the recently released findings of a Royal Commission into his administration. It was imperative, Fergusson continued, to publicly ‘disgrace the agitator’ [Ta’isi] and fully support Richardson, as ‘the native mind is a queer thing and the only way to impress it is to take a strong line and show strength and firmness’.42

Buoyed by the commission’s findings, Richardson launched a crackdown on the Mau. In January 1928, Ta’isi and two other Europeans were deported, an act New Zealand thought would quickly delude the Mau. Instead, the civil disobedience campaign escalated. New Zealand sent two warships to Apia Harbour in February 1928 and a stand-off between New Zealand forces and the Mau lasted through March. During this period of heightened tension the option of violence was discussed.43 Instead of resorting to force, Coates replaced Richardson as administrator, effective from 31 March 1928, giving him a face-saving appointment to the League of Nations where he would answer questions from the PMC about his administration in mid-1928. Ta’isi would also travel to Geneva to present a petition protesting his exile as well as one signed by 7,982 of a possible 9,325 Sāmoan taxpayers.44 Not permitted to formally address PMC hearings, Ta’isi made private representations to some commissioners.45

Fergusson was not pleased with the government’s course of action in March 1928. He wrote to Bell that the news about the termination of Richardson’s appointment ‘gave me a rather sleepless night’. This action would be a ‘surrender to the malcontents’; ‘the next administrator ... will never be trusted ... [and] the Government will never again regain its prestige’. He went on,

to give in now is only to put off the evil day when you will have to fight it out. I quite see that to send troops is a serious matter, but it seems to me that having said publicly that you are going to see the thing through, to give in now is absolutely fatal ...

‘I need hardly say,’ he added, ‘that I have no wish to interfere or be troublesome.’46

Fergusson also expressed his views to Coates in mid-March. ‘I do not want to go one step beyond what is right or constitutional in proferring advice or expressing my views but I feel that you should at least know what they are.’ He was concerned that the ‘moral effect of our armed forces has been lost owing to the natives having become alive to the fact that they have been forbidden to use force ... our bluff has been called and exposed ... Imperial troops have been publicly derided and brought into contempt.’ He was gravely concerned that the open defiance of the Mau, now led by Tupaia Tamasese Lea’ifolo – who assumed the Mau leadership after Ta’isi’s exile – was not being met with ‘firmness and decision’. He ended by telling Coates that ‘the immediate arrest of Tamasese and the dispersal of the Mau from Apia at all costs are essential steps to be taken’.47

Responding eight days later, the prime minister assured Fergusson that he had ‘carefully weighed’ his views. Intelligence from Apia stressed that the navy could not have arrested Tamasese ‘by force of arms’ without the ‘possibility of injuring and perhaps killing a large number of natives’. The commodore in command was ‘deeply impressed with the difficulty of applying naval force to ignorant and childlike natives who have offered no violence on any occasion’. Coates acknowledged that he too feared ‘our prestige has suffered’ and that although the government would ‘remedy the position by force if this is the only way’, it felt they had acted appropriately against the Mau on their ‘Pacific course’.48 What Coates did not admit here – although Richardson would reveal it to the PMC in June, asking them ‘not to record in the Minutes what I wished to say’ – was that New Zealand had taken care not to ‘prejudice’ the PMC’s opinion of New Zealand by using force in March.49

The new administrator, Colonel Stephen Allen, was introduced to the public in one newspaper profile as a ‘disciplinarian’ who excelled in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and had developed an ‘enigmatic reputation for his wartime feats. He warned the ‘recalcitrant natives to abandon their present attitude’, for it ‘would be a thousand pities if the necessity to use force should arise’. Law rests upon force and duty is still duty however unpleasant it may be ... should further clemency fail, the regrettable alternative must be faced.50 To back up this warning, a new military police force of seventy-four, made up ideally of ‘unemployed returned soldiers’, would support Allen’s administration.51 Figures 7.5 and 7.6 both illustrate the public newspaper reportage.

As part of New Zealand’s anxious preparations for the June 1928 PMC hearings, Coates said that the government would oversee ‘another period of patience’ in the hope that this may ‘facilitate an amicable settlement’ against the Sāmoans’ passive resistance.52 Comments
NEW ZEALAND'S PACIFIC EMPIRE

7.5 'Reinforcement for the administration police at Samoa, the departure from Auckland last Saturday morning', staff photographer, Auckland Weekly News, 26 April 1928 (Auckland Libraries, Sir George Grey Special Collections, AWNS-19280426-38-3).


during the hearings gave the government heart that their approach would meet with PMC approval. Richardson was particularly gratified when his military reputation was cited and the anticipated hostility of the German commissioner, Dr Ludwig Kastl, did not eventuate. Sir James Parr reported back to Wellington that the commissioners accepted New Zealand's explanation, that 'all of these evils were due

to Nelson and his friends'; or as British commissioner Lord Lugard phrased it, the slogan 'Samoa for Samoans really means government of Samoa and the natives by 5 or 6 commercial residents on the beach', led by that 'blighter' Nelson. Parr and Richardson were also heartened by commissioner Dr William Rappard's statement, 'the tutor who does not punish his ward when the ward is insubordinate is ... not doing his duty', and Kastl's argument that New Zealand's policy of toleration must now be abandoned and replaced by firmer measures. The Belgian and French commissioners 'agreed largely with Mr Kastl', Parr explained, but pointed out that 'the Mandates Commission could not advise the use of forcible or military measures'. The consensus from commissioners was that 'deference for the League should not prevent the mandatory power ... from carrying out its first duty, which was the maintenance of order'.

New Zealand took the PMC's ambiguous statement on force as tacit endorsement: 'it is safe to say,' Parr told Coates, 'that a stiffer attitude to the Mau will not be disapproved at Geneva.' After the favourable findings from the PMC, two other periods of heightened tension again raised the question of the use of force. In November 1928, Allen again sought to arrest Tupua Tamasese and alerted the government that: in 'executing [the] warrant now some bloodshed will almost certainly occur.' Coates replied that 'any action to be taken is left to your discretion'. Tupua Tamasese was arrested and then sentenced to a term in Auckland's Mount Eden prison. However, this tactic did not quell the movement: in March 1929 the Mau refused to pay a new personal tax and tensions again escalated.

An infuriated Fergusson wrote a strongly worded letter to the new Prime Minister, Joseph Ward, on 17 March 1929. In his eyes, the Mau were acting as they always had done 'in carrying out Nelson's parting advice to stick to their passive resistance ... and all would come right in their favour'. He claimed that

in dealing with natives ... you must look on them and treat them as children - be kind, be just, be tactful, but above all be strict, never allow rules to be broken with impunity ... never threaten without carrying out the threat, if cause is given.

This 'fundamental principle' had been neglected and 'led up to the present impasse ... but there comes a time when the situation has to be faced, and then the enforcement of discipline and law and order becomes a difficult and painful necessity'. All the proposed actions discussed with Allen had the same flaw: weakness. Non-payment of taxes, frequent in the Sudan, was dealt with by descending on a village and 'seizing the headman' and 'distrainting on the inhabitants', Fergusson explained.

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"Payment was taken in kind, in corn or cattle or produce and a fine inflicted." The 'headman remained in custody till the fine was paid ... if there was active resistance, then heads would get broken and possibly then the village was burnt'. Fergusson reminded Ward that the League of Nations' has expressed its opinion pretty strongly that the fault of New Zealand in the past has been its want of firmness ... and it has practically called upon New Zealand to carry out its task of enforcing law and order'. The opinion by men who are one and all experts in dealing with native races was 'ample justification in the eyes of public opinion for standing no more nonsense in Samoa'.

To Fergusson's great frustration, New Zealand revoked the tax after Allen was recalled to Wellington for meetings with the Ward government, which concluded that, given the size of the population and the opposition to the tax, even loyal Samoans would not pay up without the use of 'hard and stern means'.

The government was still unclear about the league's position. At the June 1929 PMC hearings Parr was to convey that the government would 'coerce the disaffected Samoans by force of arms should this be unavoidable' and that 'a section of the Samoans' also believed that force was the 'quickest way of concluding present difficulties'. Despite all their 'recalcitrance' the Mau had 'never been threatening and ... the movement, unfortunate and mischievous as it may be, has been conducted with some dignity and restraint'. In 1928, Parr had tried to obtain a PMC 'a definite indication to the extent to which force should be applied', but only received the 'opinion in general terms that authority must be enforced'. For the 1929 PMC meetings he was instructed to state that if the Permanent Mandates Commission found themselves unable to agree with the wisdom of the course adopted and consider the application of force essential the New Zealand Government, while of course maintaining their view of the position, would be grateful if the Commission would in intimating this fact in their report specify the manner in which, and the degree to which they consider force should be applied.

Parr was to venture into this terrain only if the PMC obviously favoured force; this discussion could also be conducted in private meetings with members. Parr did raise the issue of force and got a similar official response to that of 1928.

It was not the question of force, however, that gave Parr a 'most difficult time' at the 1929 PMC hearings, but trying to square previous annual reports and Richardson's 1928 evidence with the Vershaffelt, Park, and Berendsen (VPB) Report of January 1929. This report undermined New Zealand's previous stance and instead, to New Zealand's embarrassment, supported one of the Ma's chief criticisms of the administration: extravagance. After the PMC's censure of New Zealand's administration, the Mau issued another petition to King George in mid-November 1929, requesting that the administration of Samoa be transferred to the British Colonial Office.

Before he left New Zealand in 1928 to take up his post in Samoa, Allen had a lengthy meeting with Fergusson, who, as he reported to Coates, 'gave me a good deal of advice that will be of use I think'. In late June, Allen told the prime minister about the 'battle of Malautu' one month earlier, when Mau members suffered wounds during scuffles with New Zealand forces intent on arresting a Mau agitator, Leota. The incident 'shook them up badly' and nearly sparked a deflection of supporters from the Mau. Allen predicted that if another similar incident occurred, the Mau would dissolve quickly: 'if by chance they resist arrest and there is some bloodshed I believe it (the Mau) will go quickly, especially if we find any good chance to arrest the leaders'. Coates should 'expect something of this sort to happen'.

Allen's scenario for 'bloodshed' was remarkably close to the events of 28 December 1929. A large procession of men was heading for the Apia waterfront to greet returning deportee A. G. Smyth (who had been exiled from Samoa along with Ta'isi the previous January) and Ta'isi's lawyer, Alfred Hall Skelton. The latter was in Samoa to collect testimony for an upcoming libel action brought by Ta'isi against New Zealand Herald. When New Zealand forces tried to arrest two Mau members in the procession, the result was what has become known as the Black Saturday Massacre. The coronal inquiry into the 'riot' found that Constable William Abrahams was attacked and killed, along with eight Samoans. This triggered a response from New Zealand forces that included machine gun and rifle fire from three sharpshooters, both from a second-floor balcony. The Chief Judge, J. H. Luxford, found that the machine gun was 'fired for its moral effect' but did not cause any of the casualties, whereas the rifle fire resulted in fatal injuries. Despite concluding that rifle fire was unnecessary, he determined that the New Zealand action was 'justified' owing to the circumstances of the 'affray'. Allen reported to Wellington that the show of force had a 'great' immediate effect on the Mau. He was 'rather sorry Tamasese was killed, and would have preferred it to be Faumuina [Faime Mulinusu] ... one really bad ruffian Tuia was shot' and perhaps the man who had killed Abrahams. Apart from that there 'was no one else killed of any particular importance'. Fergusson told Ward that now that salutary 'bloodshed has ... taken place', New Zealand needed to 'maintain its authority and prestige'.

One month after the massacre, in his final quarterly report to the Secretary of State of the Dominions (Lord Passfield), and at the end of
his term as Governor-General, Ferguson recounted the events of and following 28 December, which had successfully broken the 'stalemate'. He again noted the centrality of Ta'isi: 'upon him justly falls the odium of misleading... this backward though lovable Samoan people'. Since the 'disloyal movement' had started in late 1926, New Zealand had 'been pursued by a most perverse fate' in its policy towards the Mau. In his view, the movement 'could have been nipped in the bud had firm action been taken during the first six months', or on subsequent occasions of heightened tension, but Coates had not been convinced 'that aggressive action was the best solution'. 'My own part in the Samoan drama,' Ferguson wrote, 'may be at variance with the modern conception of the function of a Governor General' but 'the suggestions... I ventured... were not without encouragement... So fortified by these assurances and by the knowledge that the Government have now taken a course of action in line with my own conclusions, I am unrepentant.'

Complex global and historical frames affected this imperial episode. The question of applying force against the non-violent Mau bedevilled New Zealand authorities for some years; when they did resort to force, it was with the knowledge that both the PMC and British would quietly approve. The PMC's attitude to force was a considerable factor in New Zealand's decision-making, as was the British approach so strongly, if secretly, advocated by Ferguson. There is irony here. In their petitions of 1919 and 1929, the Samoans had requested that the administration of their country be transferred to the British Colonial Office. They saw Britain as the superior, more professional and experienced colonial power. As Ferguson's conduct shows, however, colonial experience could cut two ways. His Samoan experience not only normalised violence as a governing tool, but taught him that its application was indispensable in dealing with 'child-like' races. In 2002 the New Zealand government rightly accepted responsibility for the 1929 massacre and apologised. Yet the agents behind this event extended beyond the New Zealand government. Governor-General Charles Ferguson exerted a great deal of influence on events leading up to the massacre. He collapsed the geographical and temporal distance between the Battle of Rossia in the Sudan in 1898 and the Black Saturday Massacre in 1929 on the streets of Apia, and thus drew clear lines of imperial practice and attitude between these seemingly disconnected episodes of British imperialism thirty-one years apart.

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Fraser (Wellington Central), and Maui Pomerae (Western Maui), NZPD Vol. 212, pp. 687, 676-7, 678, 686, 928.

For further discussion of connections between Parihaka and the news see Patricia O'Brien, "The O. F. Nelson and Sir Maui Pomare: Samoans and Maori reunited: hearings into nineteenth-century Maori land confiscations should have recorded history. As a child, Matiu Pomare lived at Parihaka when it was attacked in 1881. Hazel Riceborough, Days of Darkness: Taranski 1878-1884 Album We Never Forget (Wellington: Huis Publishers, 2009), pp. 14-51.


See various documents in ANZ. G48 35 EX 5/1. R19162267, as Prime Minister Coates to Chief Ferguson, 15 May 1928.

ANZ. ITI EX79/2/1 R17961844. O. F. Nelson to Prime Minister Massey, 8 January 1921, p. 1.


ANZ. AEGC W3340 950, box 65, part 9, R17709902, Farragut to Prime Minister, 18 November 1929.

ANZ. AEGC W3340 950, box 29, 311/3, part 6, R17709952, Allen to Coates, 11 April 1928.

ANZ. AEGC W3340 950, box 28, part 7, R17709850, Allen to Coates, 28 June 1928, for the official account of the "battle of Malietoa" see ANZ. AEGC W3340 950, box 28, R17709850, part 7, R17709890, Allen to Coates, 29 May 1928.

ANZ. AEGC W3340 950, box 28, R17709850, Allen to Coates, 28 June 1928.

ANZ. AEGC W3340 950, box 29, 311/3, part 6, R17709952, Allen to Coates, 11 April 1928.

ANZ. AEGC W3340 950, box 28, part 7, R17709850, Allen to Coates, 28 June 1928, for the official account of the "battle of Malietoa" see ANZ. AEGC W3340 950, box 28, R17709850, part 7, R17709890, Allen to Coates, 29 May 1928.


70 ANZ, AAG W3340 R50, box 65, part 9, R1770962, Allen to Ward, 8 January 1930.

71 ANZ, GAG 5/17 (1), box 40, R19167983, Ferguson to Ward, undated handwritten letter; Ward responded to his letter on 4 January 1930, giving the date of Ferguson’s letter as 2 January.


CHAPTER EIGHT

‘Fiji is really the Honolulu of the Dominion’: tourism, empire, and New Zealand’s Pacific, ca. 1900–35

Frances Steel

New Zealand’s colonial history is not confined to its own archipelago but stretches east and north into the vast Pacific. Many studies of ‘New Zealand and the Pacific’ address territorial ambitions and annexations, and the modalities and trajectories of direct rule. As familiar as we are with the limitations of perceiving empire exclusively through geopolitical and ‘hard power’ lenses, it is instructive to recall at the outset here that even geopolitical imaginings were not formed merely from maps or by imperial cartographic practices. Regular travels beyond New Zealand and into the wider region lent knowledge and substance to these imaginings and helped sustain them. Empires, as John M. MacKenzie reminds us, were not just shaped by war, economic exploitation, and settlement; they were also empires of travel. Travel was not the sole domain of a small number of leading figures and officials. Rather, it involved hundreds of people who pursued a range of projects and itineraries, among them, and notably after 1900, increasing numbers of tourists. The beginnings of a tourist traffic between New Zealand and other islands in the Pacific forms the basis of this chapter. I examine how the industry became a source for the spread of new geographical and cultural perceptions of New Zealand’s neighbourhood and new, non-peripheral imaginings of New Zealand’s role in the Pacific. In short, I look to the ways in which tourism fashioned new frameworks for ordering relations between New Zealand and its neighbouring islands, including those beyond its sphere of formal sovereignty. Key to these changing perceptions was shipping. Colonial tourism has a maritime history, but questions of transport have sat largely at the margins of the existing historiography. The steamships ferrying tourists from New Zealand into the wider Pacific carried diverse passenger lists and cargoes. For this reason, the tourist traffic cannot be