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**Establishing Zion in Sauniatu Village:
A Historical analysis of a Latter-day Saints
gathering in Samoa**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of**

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Abstract

A feature of Latter-day Saints consolidation methods in the Pacific has been the establishment of gathering settlements for its members designed as a religious sanctuary for the persecuted and untrained. This approach varied throughout the Pacific depending on the steadiness of the missionary programme and success of retaining its members. Apart from Hawaii, Samoa was one of these unique places in which gathering settlements were established for the Latter-day Saints.

The focus of this thesis concerns the in-depth examination of one of these latter-day Saints gathering havens in Samoa, Sauniatu village. The rich unpublished primary sources of this Branch make this a valuable exercise. Within these materials contained valuable insights into the nature of Latter-day Saints community organisation adapted in Samoa as well as understanding the cultural interactions between the Samoan saints and the European missionaries.

Because Latter-day Saint origin was in America, this study indeed begins by examining the social and doctrinal bases of the church and in particular this notion of gathering. Chapter One, therefore, shows this relationship of the gathering in America and its modification in the Pacific context. The Latter-day Saints arrival in Samoa and its difficulties is analysed in Chapter Two. The push to establishing gathering settlements in Samoa is discussed in Chapter Three. In Chapter Four, an outline of the Sauniatu administrative system and local Saints' attitudes towards it are examined. Chapter Five presents an in-depth analysis of the nature of the village in its internal and external interactions. In Chapter Six, it explores the village as a functional mechanism for institutional operations. Chapter Seven will attempt to inquire the village's effectiveness and show its effects on the members, and Latter-day Saints development in Samoa. A conclusion assesses the overall success of Sauniatu village and suggests some of the reasons for its successes and failures.

Sauniatu Village Monument



Acknowledgements

First and foremost I express my gratitude to Associate Professor Peter Lineham for overseeing my thesis and rendering me assistance when needed. I have thoroughly enjoyed the journey so far and look forward for the next stage. I am also grateful to my family the Tutagalevao's for their support. To the Midway Foundation, I appreciate the financial support in making the research for this Thesis possible. I would also like to thank all the families overseas that assisted me with accommodation namely, the Te'o family, Misa family, Ah-hoy family, Keil family, Polu family and the Peterson family (Lola and Lolani) as well as Athena Ah Chong and Lewis Ng Wun. To the CES co-ordinators that offered their expertise with the direction of this work, James Ah-mu, Brett MacDonald, Richard Aspinall, Meliula Fata and Ian Ardern. Thank you also to the staff at the Brigham Young Hawaii Campus Pacific Islands Studies Library, staff at the Church Archives in Salt Lake City, Harold B. Lee Library in Provo, Utah. I extend my appreciation to Dr Carl Harris and John Hart (via Johansson family in NZ) for rendering me their primary materials. Last but not least I acknowledge Heavenly Father for his guidance and blessings.

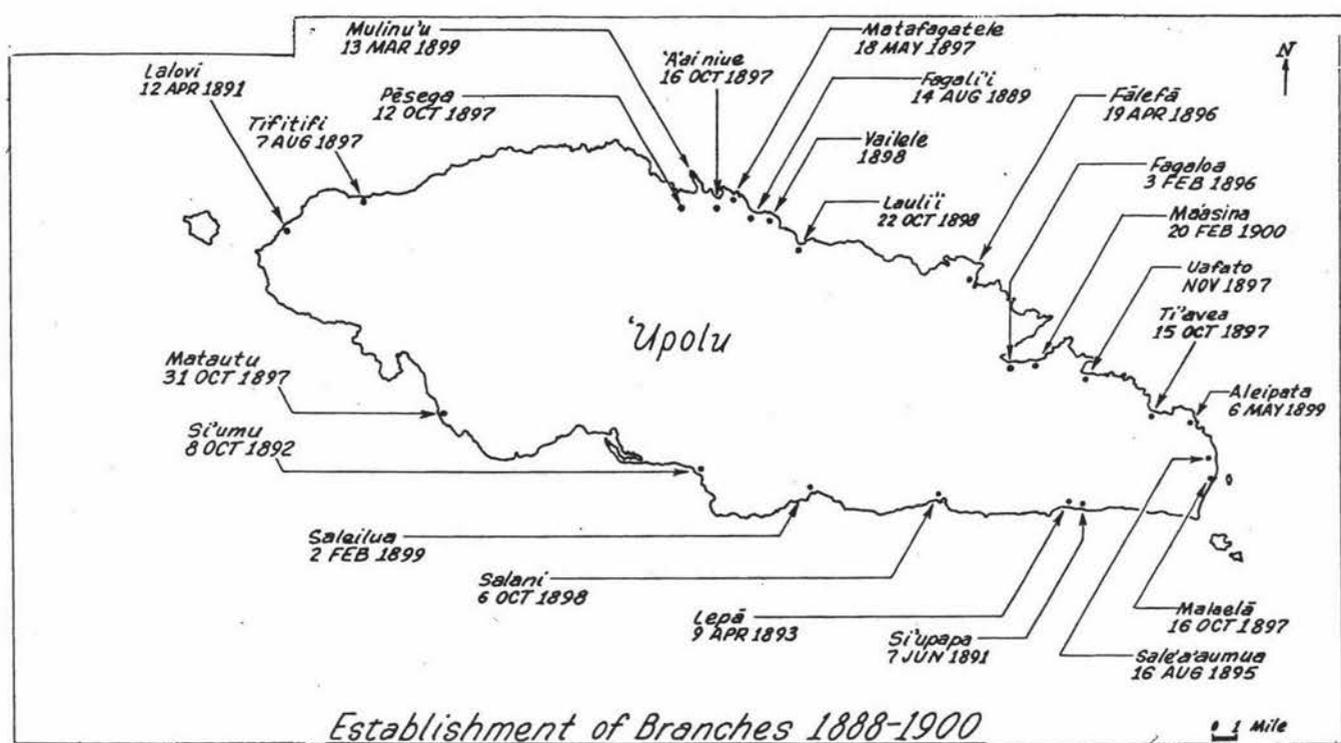
This thesis is dedicated to Sauniatu village, my great grandmother Mile Tufuga, parents Eipo and Vai, as well as Sinalei.

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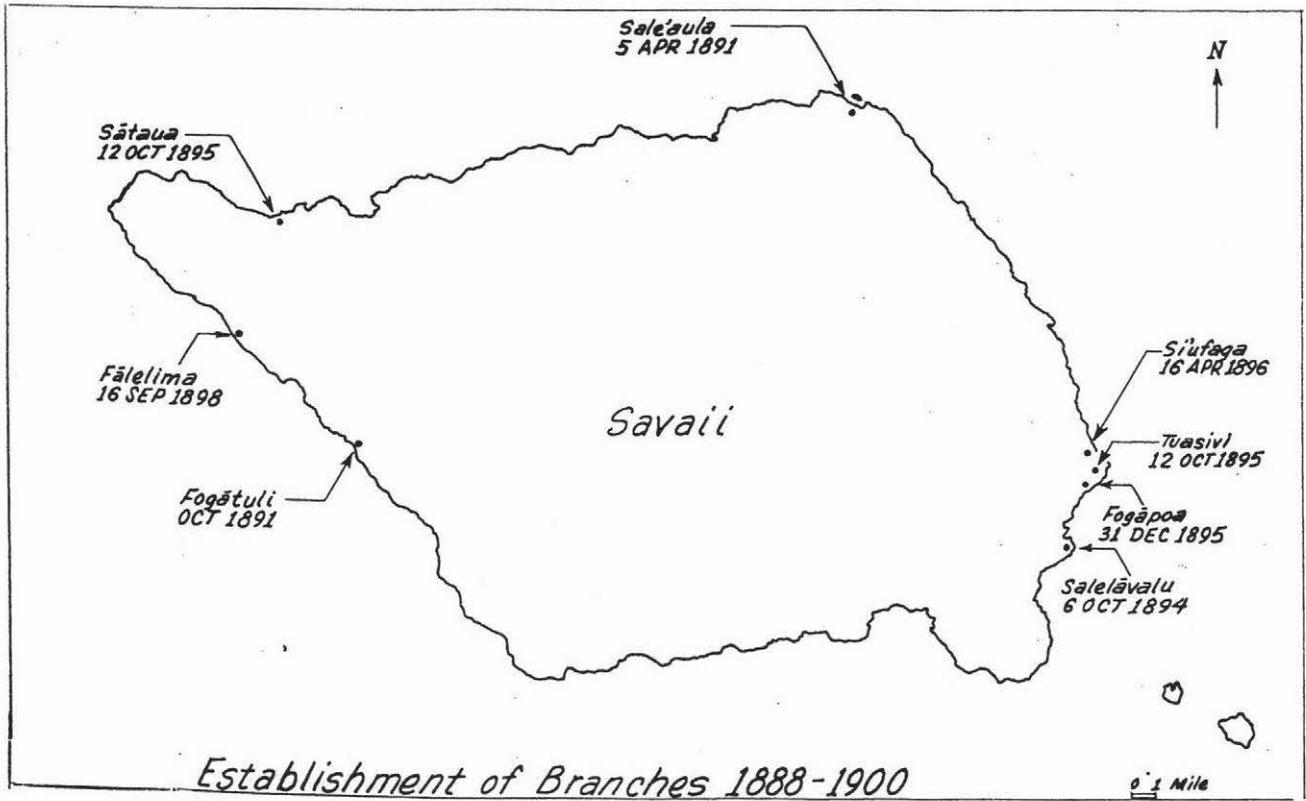
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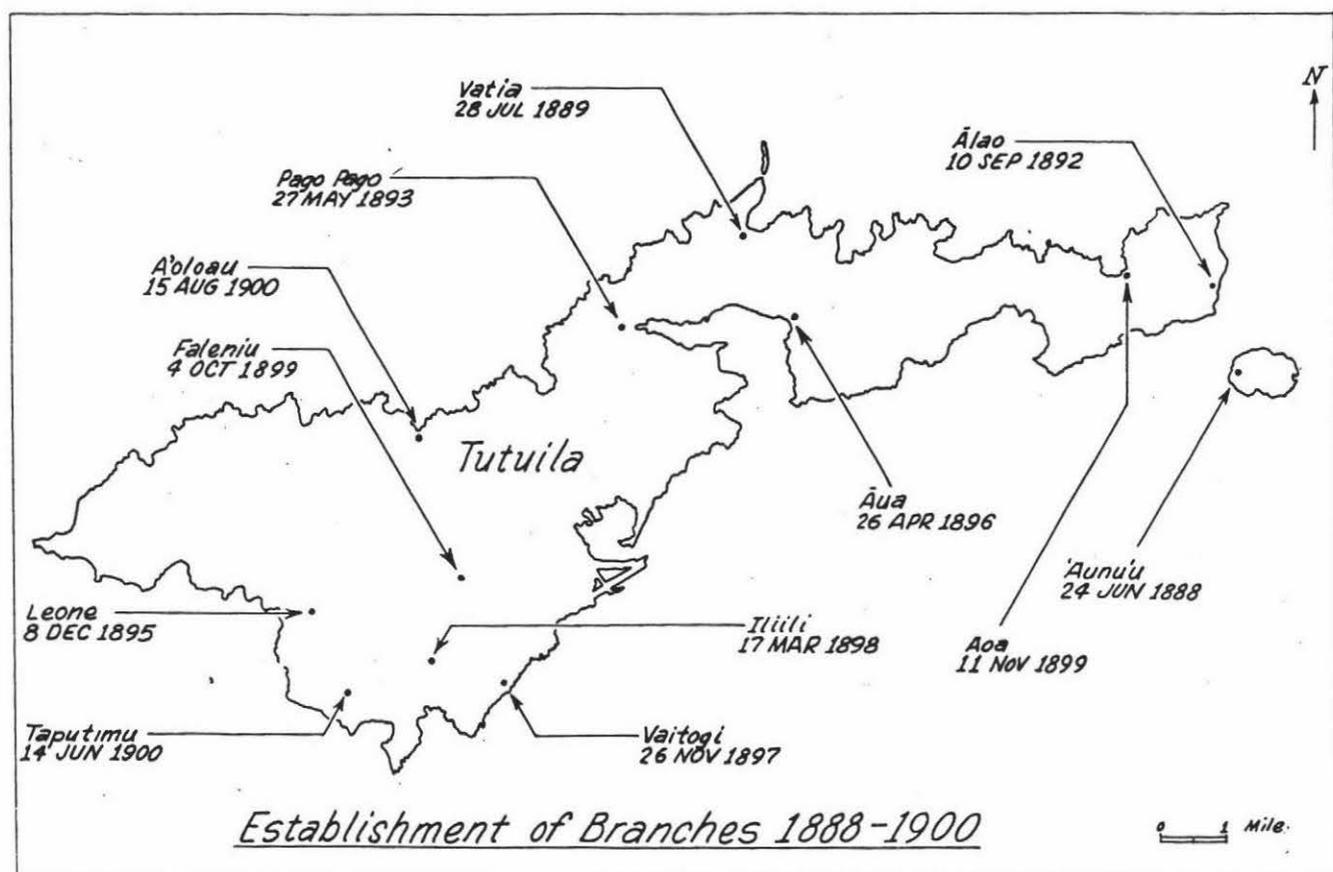
Map of Samoa



Another map



Another



“The professional in us fights against religious naivete, while the religionist in us fights against secular naivete - believing too little. And if this internal warfare weren't enough, we have a similar two-front war externally – against non-Mormons who think we believe not enough”.

Leornard J. Arrington, Reflections on the founding and Purpose of the Mormon History Association, 1965-1983, in *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 10, 1983: p. 101.

Introduction

The story of Mormonism and its remarkable growth in the 1830s is well documented and will forever be part of a celebrated American nineteenth century phenomenon. The trials, tribulations and resilience the church experienced throughout this period in America have attracted attention by scholars both within and outside. There is a 'storybook' feel to the history of the church from a rural-based religion in frontier America to its present-day status as a developing and near global religious organisation generating attention and critical analysis.

General Literature Review of Mormon History Writing

A feature of scholarly attention has been the nature of Mormon History/historiography and its journey through several stages throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century until the present time where continuing developments point to important and exciting directions. A recent published scholarly work by Ronald Walker, David J. Whittaker and James B. Allen, provided an exceptional and extensive analysis of Mormon History writing from its early beginnings till the present time with full index and biblical references.¹ As they indicate the first phase of Mormon Historiography during 19th Century can be characterised as highly partisan and less academic. This was manifested in the scholarly works by both the ardent Mormon defenders and Mormon antagonists. Within all the narratives, one group sought to argue the merits of Mormonism while the other sought to denounce its claims, thus leaving little room for purely academic writing in seeking to understand the nature of the people and its organisation.²

¹ Ronald W. Walker (eds.), Mormon History, Chicago, 2001.

² Early Mormon works included Orson Pratt, An Interesting Account of Several remarkable Visions, and of the Late discovery of Ancient American Records, Edinburgh, 1840; BH Roberts, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6 vols., Salt Lake City, 1902-1912; There were early Anti Mormon History writing published by Mormon defectors, journalists, rival ministers and so forth with the most notable ones are Eber D Howe, Mormonism Unvailed; or, A Faithful Account of that Singular Imposition and Delusion, Painesville, 1834; Daniel Kidder, Mormonism and the Mormons: A Historical View of the Rise and Progress of the Sect-Styled Latter-day Saints, New York, 1842.

During the early twentieth century up to the 1950s, there was a growing maturity in the history writing of Mormonism as it experienced a progressive stage. Buoyed by its developments in Utah, the Church was no longer isolated in the Rocky Mountains, as their outward emphasis on worldwide expansion allowed them to pursue more national and secular aims by becoming more involved in mainstream society. This was also mirrored in the “new direction” to the writing of Mormon history that emerged from these changes. According to Ronald W. Walker’s extensive bibliographical index on Mormon historiography, studying the past was no longer solely reliant on written sources but other tools were incorporated such as folklore, rural geography and historical sociology reflecting the Progressive and New Deal eras. There seems to be an emergence of a more professional and academic involvement provided by professional inquiry and with new interests. By the end of the period there were increasing attempts to produce more academic and balanced history writing.³

This desire was furthered by additional progress since the 1950s; Mormon history writing became more humane and universal. New methods were adopted firmly established in disciplines such as philosophy, social psychology, economics and religious studies. The new crop of historians sought a middle ground, exploring new issues not to discredit Mormonism’s claims but in the hope of broadening the foundation for awareness of Mormonism’s history.⁴ The attempt to find a middle ground and broaden the base of Mormon history amongst the contemporary Mormon historians heightened tensions during the later 1970s to the early 1980s. Church historians and several Church leaders (namely Elder Boyd K Packer and President Benson) disagreed on the direction of Mormon written

³ Ronald W. Walker, Mormon History, Chicago, 2001, pp. 31-51. He acknowledges numerous references to published works of this period among them Richard T Ely, Economic Aspects of Mormonism, 1903; Lowry Nelson, The Mormon Village: A Technique of Land Settlement, 1952; Fawn Mckay Brodie No Man Knows my History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, New York, 1963.

⁴ Prominent historians of this period especially within the Church are Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900, Harvard, 1958; James B Allen, The Story of the Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, 1976; Then there were Institutional Historians supported by the Church to publish Religious oriented history of the Church, served at the Church University at BYU Institute for the LDS Church History Department There were a large number of articles published in Periodicals such as BYU Studies and Journal of Mormon History;; Ronald W Walker, Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young, University of Illinois, 1999.

output. Disputes centred on contemporary scholarly writings relating to the origins of LDS history. Church leaders supported a more faith-promoting and sympathetic narrative avoiding the secularisation of Church history writing that could escalate into tensions.⁵ Historians like Leonard Arrington and James B. Allen questioned the hand of providence in the development of Mormon occurrences. They were willing to explore and present natural explanations by finding the balance in their writings between the outmost religious and secular outlook. Allen's work, 'The Story of the Latter-day Saints' (1977) was an archetype of this new Mormon history exploring the shaded historical issues.⁶ The tensions eventually led to the transfer of Arrington and his band of professional Church historians from the Church's History Division to the Church University at Brigham Young University in which they established the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History. There history writing was moderately subdued and kept at a low profile.

In addition to scholarly works supported by the Mormon institution, there was also a quantity of publications by outsiders or non-Mormons written in non-Mormon Institutions. Their contributions broaden the methods and direction of Mormon history writing as sociology and religion was incorporated.⁷ Apart from the writing of Mormon history, another development emerging from this has been the social science literature on Mormons. Scholar Armand L. Mauss analysis on Social Science literature in his 'Mormon History', (2001), distinguishes it from the literature that is purely "historical" in nature. This form of writing encompasses historical and contemporary studies of social geography,

⁵ Ezra Taft Benson, God's Hand in our Nation's History, in 1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year, Provo, Utah, Brigham Young University Press, 1977. President Benson was very critical in this speech of Allen's book, The Story of the Latter-day Saints. Also Boyd K. Packer, The Mantle Is Far Greater than the Intellect, BYU Studies 21 (Summer 1981): pp. 264,268. Other conservative academics also questioned the direction of secularising New Mormon History such as Richard Stephen Marshall, the New Mormon History, senior Honor's project summary, University of Utah, 1977.

⁶ Another significant work includes Leonard J. Arrington, The Mormon experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints, New York, 1979.

⁷ One of the earliest of scholarly works was Thomas Odea's, The Mormons, Chicago, 1957; Jan Shippo's work also introduced new methods like the "insider-outsider perspective" in a Dialogue and Book, An 'Insider-Outsider' in Zion, Dialogue: Journal of Mormon thought 15 (Spring 1982): p.146 and can be found in, Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition, Urbana, 1985, p 143; Armand L. Mauss, The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation, Urbana, 1994.

rural sociology and agricultural economics of Mormonism.⁸ In its early days, there was the tendency to look at the past studying themes based on family life starting with Richard T Ely's Marxist explication on the nature of Mormonism's economy.⁹ From the 1950s onwards there was more emphasis on quantitative and qualitative research in relation to more contemporary issues facing Mormonism such as Americanisation, assimilation, accommodation, the role of women, secularisation, modernisation and religiosity. For instance this is evident in scholarly works by Jan Shipps and Harold Bloom to name a few.¹⁰ Both Mormon and non-Mormon scholars have acknowledged the importance of the religious experiences as data rather than purely myth.

There are further directions that Mormon history writing is exploring and there remain identified gaps to be ultimately filled. In a combined edited published work by Walker, Whittaker and Allen, they recognised areas to be further developed. They include scholarly biographies, Church expansion beyond Utah and histories of the common Mormon people while in social science literature on the Latter-day Saints. Also there is the need for analysis on the contemporary period and on the establishment of durable Mormon communities in exotic locales just to name a few.¹¹

Mormons in the Pacific

Since the beginning of missionary activity in the Pacific throughout the nineteenth century, the islanders had encountered various forms of Christian missions. The significance of the London Missionary Society landing on Tahiti at Matavai Bay in 1797 had tremendous implications for missionary work in the Pacific. The early and largely

⁸ Armand L. Mauss, Flowers, Weeds, and Thistles: The State of Social Science Literature on the Mormons, in Walker (eds), *Mormon History*, Chicago, 2001, pp. 153-56.

⁹ Richard T. Ely, Economic Aspects of Mormonism, *Harpers's Monthly* 106, April 1903, p. 668.

¹⁰ Jan Shipps, Mormonism: A New Religious Tradition, Urbana, 1984; Harold Bloom, Toward a Social Science of Contemporary Mormondom, *BYU Studies* 26, (Winter 1986), pp. 73-121.

¹¹ Cited by Walker, pp. 95-176.

successful efforts of the London Missionary Society in establishing a permanent foothold on Tahiti paved the way for the influx of missionary societies and organisations eager to taste conversion success. Intense competition amongst them saw efforts to solidify and increase from this favourable foundation while at times others attempted to discredit their rivals.

The middle of the nineteenth century witnessed the arrival of other Protestant groups in the form of the Methodists and Wesleyans, together with the Catholics created a healthy competition. Inevitably there were outlined areas of influence, as competition became territorial. The LMS ventured off to the Melanesian Islands having already established themselves in Samoa and Rarotonga. The Catholics were very influential in central Polynesia and in Tahiti while the Methodists were an irresistible force in Tonga.

Increased competition was furthered by the arrival of additional mission organisations in the form of the Mormons and the Seventh Day Adventist in the second half of the nineteenth century. Rather than pioneering and evangelising unfamiliar territories and islands, the Mormons took a somewhat cautious and less adventurous approach. They targeted already harvested and christianised fields, beginning with Tahiti in 1844 and Hawaii during the 1850s. This general pattern throughout the Pacific was very much applicable to the situation in Samoa. Protestant and Catholic values particularly were noticeably incorporated into Samoan society.

Contrary to these beginnings and similarities in achievement and influences on Samoan society, the Mormon arrival was belated and experienced limited success in its early years. The initial Mormon story was somewhat different as they alienated themselves from island politics preferring to focus on proselytising and religious matters.

Analysing significant scholarly works devoted to Mormonism in the Pacific and in Samoa reveal a paucity of academic research and analysis on any issue. Besides New Zealand and to an extent Australia, where there have been several published and unpublished works throughout the years in the form of theses, there has been less work

done.¹² References are made sporadically on very few topics but the bulk of the analysis has been done by Church academics with the sole intention of providing a more generalised history of the whole area. The scope of Ellsworth and Britsch's works has been vast in scope but thin in analysis.

In terms of in-depth Latter-day Saints research relating to Samoa, Carl Harris and John Hart have produced the lone extensive analysis in their book to celebrate the centennial of the founding of the LDS Apia Mission in 1888.¹³ Their book was geared towards a more institutional and religious audience than academic. Along with an article by Kenneth Baldrige, they provide some invaluable historical data and a narrative of early Mormon developments especially the first decade.¹⁴ The concern is that such works are hardly recent and Church centred instead of providing unbiased in-depth analysis.

There are still a large number of unread primary materials available for analysis on the historical developments of the work in Samoa. There are published sources, manuscripts, journals and other materials making such an exercise viable.

Purpose of Thesis

The literature review of Mormon history writing revealed that neglected topics identified within Mormon history writing in general including scholarly works in the

¹² There has been a fairly extensive historical analysis in the Pacific. Accounts of the church include Brian Hunt, *Zion in New Zealand*, Hamilton, 1974; R. Lanier Britsch, *Moramona: The Mormons in Hawaii*, Laie, Hawaii, 1989; *Unto the Islands of the Sea: A History of the Latter-day Saints in the Pacific*, Salt Lake City, 1986, Ian Barker, *The Connexion: The Mormon Church and the Maori People*, Victoria University of Wellington, M.A. thesis, 1965; Marjorie Newton, *Southern Cross Saints*, Sydney, 1994 (?); Max Stanton, *Samoan Saints: Samoans in the Mormon Village of Laie*, Laie, Hawaii, Dissertation, June, 1973; Kenneth Baldrige, *Sauniatu, Western Samoa: A Special Purpose Village, 1904-34* in *Journal of Polynesian Society*, vol 87, 1978, pp. 165-192. Non-Mormon scholars include Norman Douglas, *Latter-day Saints Missions and Missionaries in Polynesia, 1844-1960*, National University of Australia, PhD Dissertation, Canberra, 1974; Peter Lineham, *The Mormon Message in the Context of Maori Culture*, in *Journal of Mormon history*, vol 17, 1991, pp 62-93. Non-Academic history include Grant Underwood, *Explorations in Pacific History*, Provo, Utah, 2000.

¹³ Jennie M. Hart, John W. Hart & R. Carl Harris, *Samoan Mission History 1888-1900 vol. I*, unpublished, June 1988, Sesquicentennial of 100 years of Mormon Apia Mission 1888-1988. Carl Harris also distributed an unpublished work earlier called, *History of the Samoan Apia Mission*, unpublished, 1983.

¹⁴ Cited Baldrige, pp. 165-192

Pacific and social science literature. This study intends to explore Mormon history beyond Utah analysing historical aspects of a common Mormon people in the Pacific Islands, Samoa. The scope of this study will therefore focus on conceptualising the Mormon doctrine of Gathering with particular emphasis on analysing its application to the establishment of Samoan Mormon communities in the earliest years of the Church principally the Mormon village of Sauniatu. The thesis further examines the significance of the establishing of Mormon gathering communities in Samoa. This importance has wide ranging implications to Church development at the time and in the impending years to come. I acknowledge that even such an analysis induces me to speculate and generalise due to the limited nature of other primary sources.

It is hoped that this historical examination will be followed by the opportunity in future research to analyse the contemporary period of Mormonism in Samoa to understand how the past has affected the present. It is plausible that from such a study may spring forth new methods and directions that will hopefully contribute to Mormon history writing, perhaps generating more scholarly research on Mormon issues in the Pacific especially in Samoa. The prospective questions may include the effects of Mormonism on the indigenous population and also Pacific influence on the Church. Also there is a need to understand the nature of retention of commitment and the need for continued maintenance from historical to recent times within the Church in this locale.

The study will be based on unpublished primary material situated at the Latter-day Saints Church Archives in Salt Lake City. Not surprisingly a more in-depth analysis and picture emerges than drawn by previous researches. Similarly to the story of the Church in mainland America and in Hawaii, this study finds evidence of little success in its earlier years and the constant struggles to overcome challenges. There were partly some successes for Mormon development that eventually came into fruition in the latter part of the 20th

century, but the events leading up to the gathering and at the time of its discontinuation, there was little success.

Due to the significance of this notion of the Gathering as elementary to Mormon development, there is the common tendency to be tempted into exploring too many streams to make a valid assessment. These aspects will become more comprehensible as they are explored. The conclusion of the thesis will argue that there is an immense potential to expand this study and further analyse the contemporary period involving the contribution of such a community to contemporary Mormon development in such a locale as Samoa. Also did the establishment of such a Mormon community and its aftermath contribute in building a durable Mormon infrastructure while in isolation away from the central Mormon administration at Pesega?

There are challenges to the form of narrative in this research especially to find a suitable structural framework. Because the topic is still in its scholarly infancy I have experimented with a type of narrative that incorporates a balance of both historical narrative and analysis. I acknowledge that the topic may be refined and improved by others in future studies, as more specialist and comparative research is done. A final comment is that this is not a genuinely island-oriented perspective due to the emphasis of the project and the difficulties in sources of obtaining island attitudes and opinions.

A Note on Sources and Statistics

It will be noticed that there is an extensive use of Latter-day Saint primary materials in this thesis ranging from missionary journals, diaries, letters, and autobiographies to Branch unit records. The primary sources used are kept at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Church History Office and Archives in Salt Lake City Utah. The

unpublished materials used are missionary journals by Samoan Mission Presidents namely Dean, Merrill and Sanders.

In addition to these unpublished journals there was also missionary letters sent to the Church newspaper *Deseret News* to be published throughout Church circles. It is very useful for analysing the early years of Church development in Samoa especially to get a feel of the atmosphere and picture of Mormon activity, success, failure and attitudes towards the work. The bulk of these letters along with typescript extracts from statistical reports of the Samoan Mission, Mission President reports and newspaper clippings are incorporated in the Samoan Manuscript History kept at the Church History Office and Archives.

Andrew Jensen who later became the Assistant Church historian in 1897 and held this position for a lengthy period of time collected the majority of these records and documents. He made a visit throughout the Pacific amongst the several Missions including Samoa in the mid 1890s with a twofold assignment of gathering historical information and records to assisting in establishing more effective record keeping amongst the Church Missions.

The latter chapters of the Thesis rely heavily on the Sauniatu Branch Records also kept at the Church Archives. The missionaries assigned in Sauniatu were responsible for recording all the events occurring during their tenure there. It consists of the day-to-day entries of village life and activities referring to both secular matters of church village life and spiritual matters concerning people in the Branch. This in-depth analysis of the nature of the village may not have been possible without this invaluable resource. I am aware of the weakness of these sources because of the absence of indigenous Samoan voices and documents, but such materials are almost non-existent. Indeed there is a great deal of "American missionary" bias and this is unfortunate. However it is difficult to avoid, as it is the only ones available. Despite the difficulties of the exercise in reading the silences, perhaps it is still possible to obtain an understanding of indigenous Samoan voices through their responses and actions as recorded in the missionary records.

In terms of statistics and figures, it is very difficult to illustrate at times the impact of a certain argument due to official records not disclosing any exact statistical information during my visit to the Archives. There is no real accuracy in membership numbers in some years. Hence at times data utilised were obtained from published secondary sources, and they have extracted their information from the Church Archives since their works were institutionally based.¹⁵ The statistics used in this thesis is for comparative purposes.

¹⁵

The bulk of the references will be on the works by Baldrige, Hart and Harris.