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August 2008

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**A QUITE REVOLUTION:
A HISTORY OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND
THE EDUCATION OF CATHOLIC GIRLS IN
KIRIBATI**

by

Alaima Talu

A thesis submitted in fulfillment for the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts in History

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School of Social Sciences
Faculty of Arts and Law
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December 2009

Declaration

Statement by the Author

I Alaima Talu declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published, or substantially overlapping with material submitted for the award of any other degree at any institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

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Statement by supervisor

The research in this thesis was performed under our supervision and to our knowledge is the sole work of Alaima Talu

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Acknowledgements

I would not have been able to complete this thesis on my own. I would like to thank Professor Ian Campbell for allowing me this opportunity to do study at this level. I would like to thank my supervisors, Associate Professor Morgan Tuimaleali'ifano and Dr. Christine Weir for their invaluable assistance and support.

I would like to thank Mr. Richard Smith and Ane Teilauea, for their kindness in providing me with accommodation at their homes in Suva at different times. I want to thank all those many librarians at the USP library and Pacific Collection, at the Pacific Theological College, the National Archives in Suva, the Kiribati National library and Archives on Bairiki, Tarawa, and at the USP Centre for their kind patience in helping me find what I needed. Thank you Dr. Ueantabo Neemia Mackenzie, Selafina Ioakim for the offer of a work room at the USP Centre, Tarawa. *Kam aitau ao are i eta ami akoi.*

To my friends: fellow religious and students, I am very grateful for the prayers, your friendship, love and moral support. Special mention goes to Tui Clery, much gratitude not only for time spent reading and editing my chapters but for 'journeying' with me.

Thank you Father Kerouanton, and to all the ex-Taborio teachers and ex-students who gave of your time to supply me with the information about the school. Lastly, to my Sisters, Sister Lucia Bwebwetake, Teena Kum Kee and all the Sisters in the community at Teaoraereke, Nabua, and to the present Provincial administration: *kam rabwa* for allowing me to complete this piece of work.

Special thanks to Sister Margaret Sullivan and Brother Donald, FMS, for sharing with me your views on education in Kiribati and on Catholic Education. Thank you very much too Sister Margaret for the use of the OLSH Archives computer, room, and material.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Professor Barrie Macdonald of Massey University and Dr. Max Quanchi of Queensland University of Technology for your interest and support of my work.

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Map of the Pacific Region¹



¹ <http://www.worldmap.org/region.php?region=South%20Pacific%20Islands> accessed 13 March, 2009.

Abstract

This thesis is a history of Catholic education in the British Colony of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands and later the independent Republic of Kiribati. No contemporary account of the historical development of the Catholic education system has previously been undertaken. This thesis provides an account that contributes new knowledge and insights, based upon first hand experiences and insider perspectives, particularly the education of young women on the atoll of Tarawa. People from outside of the Pacific have written many of the historical accounts on education in Kiribati or elsewhere in the Pacific. In order to begin to redress this imbalance I draw on my experiences of teaching and learning in Kiribati, mainly in the first secondary school for girls to be established in Kiribati, named Taborio.

Acronyms

ABCFM	American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
BPC	British Phosphate Commissioners
EBS	Elaine Bernacchi School
FDNSC	Filiae Dominae Nostrae a Sacro Corde / FDNSC Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
GEIC	Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony
IHC	Immaculate Heart College
KGV	King George V School
LMS	London Missionary Society
MSC	Missionnaires du Sacre Cœur / Missionaries of the Sacred Heart
OLSH	Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
SHM	Sacred Heart Mission

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis is a history of Catholic education in Kiribati. Several historical accounts of Catholic education in Kiribati and other parts of the Pacific are available, but this is the first by an insider who can draw on personal experience both as a pupil and teacher within Catholic schools in Kiribati. I studied and taught at Taborio, the first secondary school for girls established there. The ultimate aim of this thesis is to consider the influence of Catholic education on local girls and women.

In order to help the reader to better understand the revolutionary nature of Taborio in terms of changing attitudes and possibilities for women and girls in Kiribati, this thesis takes a chronological approach and addresses some fundamental questions: What constituted indigenous education in Kiribati? How did Christianity, specifically the first Protestant missions, affect it? And what influence did the colonial authorities have upon the early schooling provided for the Kiribati community? This thesis will then consider the arrival of the Catholic missionaries, who first came to Kiribati in 1888, the founding and development of Catholic education, and how this was affected by the needs of the colonial administration. These chapters provide the context and grounding for the description and analysis of the importance of Taborio to education in Kiribati and particularly to the education of young women.

Taborio is located in the northern end of Nootoue village in North Tarawa and was the first secondary school for girls established by the Catholic Mission in 1955. I was the very first ex-student and trained local teacher to teach in Taborio. This thesis is based on the range of experiences, reflections and personal connections I have established in many years of involvement with Catholic education both as a student and as a teacher. It therefore contributes to the writing of the 'Herstory' of education in Kiribati, and documents the transition from indigenous education where the first teachers were family members and the lived, natural environment was the classroom, to formalized education

systems based on Western and Christian values. This thesis documents and therefore honours the crucial roles played by the Catholic Sisters within education in Kiribati, focusing particularly on the education of girls.

Kiribati's total population in the most recent census in 2005 was 92,530¹, 51,144² of whom described themselves as Catholics. The Catholic Church runs seven senior secondary schools out of a total of eighteen presently operating in the country. Five are under the control and direction of the Catholic Education Office. These are *St. Joseph's College*, Tabwiroa, Abaiang, *Immaculate Heart College*, Taborio, North Tarawa, *St. Louis High School*, Teaoraereke, South Tarawa, *Sacred Heart High School*, Bikenibeu, South Tarawa, and *St. Francis High School*, on Christmas Island in the Line Group or the Linnix. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) and the Betio Parish run the other two secondary schools. Of the other eleven secondary schools, three are government-owned and run and the rest are church schools which are operated by different Christian denominations. The Catholic Education Office is responsible for around 1,400 out of 4,310 students across all senior secondary schools in Kiribati.³

There have been two histories of the Catholic Church in Kiribati, both written by French MSCs with strong interests in the work of the mission in Kiribati. The first of these was written in 1939 by Father Ernest Sabatier and is entitled *Astride the Equator*. It coincided with the Golden Jubilee of the Mission. The second book: *We are dying to see you*, was written by Father Delbos in 1986 for the centenary of the Church in Kiribati as well as for the arrival of the Sacred Heart Missionaries.

The year 2008 marked the 120th anniversary of the MSCs in Kiribati and Catholic Education in the country since their arrival in 1888. Catholic Education has developed from humble beginnings within places of learning known as *village schools*. Village schools were characterized by a curriculum which was comprised of religious instruction

¹ Kiribati National Statistics Office, *2005 Census of Population*: Vol. 1: information and tables, Ministry of Finance, Bairiki, Tarawa. p 16

² Ibid. pp. 36-37

³ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2005. *Digest of Education Statistics 2005*, Republic of Kiribati. pp. 72-78

supplemented by reading, writing, counting and singing in the vernacular. These schools gradually progressed into established *island schools* in the 1960s where local skills were taught in conjunction with academic based subjects such as domestic science, mathematics and social studies. Government run primary schools and secondary education grew from the early successes of these Catholic and other mission schools.

All levels in education are equally important. Each builds on the previous one and offers different pathways to learners. In 2001 the Kiribati government requested the Churches to expand their secondary schools at upper levels since it had taken over the secondary junior level, forms 1-3. This request was recognition of the ongoing contribution of Catholic education and the other churches to education in Kiribati. This thesis concentrates on the ‘influence’ of the Catholic Mission education on girls and young women at Taborio.

Methodology

This thesis sees history as part of a continuum. All history is linked to and shapes the present. It contributes not only to a greater understanding of the early philosophies of Catholic educators and education, but can also be used to reflect on and inform educational practices and curricula in the present. A variety of sources have been used, including oral traditions and cultural practices today that illuminate pre-colonial indigenous education processes, the earliest written missionary accounts of the 19th century, many oral accounts from Sisters, students and others involved in education in Kiribati. These interviews as well as my own reflections and experiences, constitute important sources for this thesis.

The establishment of and teaching in Catholic schools is considered through an examination of the written accounts of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony’s Education Inspector. The inspector was attempting to influence and to develop Catholic education in line with the colonial vision and with stereotypes about the innate high standards of European educators. These reports reveal that such high standards were by no means

uniformly the case, with village schools run by local catechists performing better in many instances. This chapter also considers the status and development of Catholic schools through the letters written by sisters whilst stationed on these islands. I also present new information on education in the ‘English School’ on Butaritari, gathered from an oral source, Meerea Rabaua Redfern. Meerea’s story and the information and insights she shared has helped me to deepen and enlarge the ‘her-story’ of indigenous women in Catholic education.

I also utilize accounts and sources which constitute more contemporary History in the continuum, such as the *2008 Education Summit* in Kiribati and the *Pacific Roots Symposium* held at the University of the South Pacific in December 2008. It is hoped that the weaving together of these diverse sources can lead to a holistic, useful and usable thesis which is relevant not only to historians but also to Pacific peoples and all those interested in education and promoting educational opportunities for women and girls.

Acknowledging the Author

I am a Tuvaluan, born on Nanumea after World War Two. Taborio is very much part of my story and life journey. The major decisions that shaped my life began in Tuvalu and Taborio. My thinking and perceptions have been shaped and coloured by my upbringing in Tuvalu, my initial education with the London Missionary Society, and later the Catholic education I received at Taborio. The fact that I was away from home and family when attending Taborio meant that Catholic education and relationships formed within the school had a very significant impact on my life. I am in part a *product* of the Catholic education system and I have gone on to make the choice to become a Catholic educator myself; it is in this context that the reflections and analysis in this thesis is grounded.

In the 1960s when I reached school age there were very limited educational opportunities for girls in Tuvalu. A very few girls had been sent to Papauta in Samoa for further education. On their return they often taught in the LMS mission schools on their home islands. My father had missed his own chance for an education due to the death of his

adopted aunty and was determined not to let this happen to his children. He believed I could live a better life with a western education than just living at home. My father was fluent in the Kiribati language from having spent part of his childhood on Banaba and then Nui. Later in life he returned to Banaba as a labourer in the phosphate industry. His wide experiences, connections and fluency in Kiribati and English played an important part in his pursuing education opportunities for me in Kiribati. Through his friend, Viane Tabuanaba, the Kiribati Catholic catechist on Nanumea, I was able to enroll into Catholic schools in Kiribati.⁴

Education and the Christian Missions

Formal education in the British Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony began with the Christian Missions; the Boston-based, *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (ABCFM), the *London Missionary Society* (LMS) from Samoa and the *Catholic Sacred Heart Mission* (SHM) from France. The ABCFM made its headquarters on Abaiang in the north in 1857. It extended its work from Makin in north Kiribati to Tabiteuea in the south. The LMS began in Tuvalu in 1865 and moved to the five islands in southern Kiribati in 1870. The Sacred Heart Missionaries penetrated this Protestant preserve in 1888 with its headquarters in Nonouti in the south. From there it reached out north and south. Each of these conducted its own programme of evangelization as well as its own education systems in its introduced schools. Hawaiian missionaries assisted the handful of white missionaries of the ABCMF. In Tuvalu and in the southern Kiribati, Samoan missionaries evangelized the islands. The Sacred Heart missionaries came in response to a request from two Kiribati men who had embraced the Catholic faith in Tahiti while working there as indentured labourers.

The two groups of islands – Gilberts and Ellice - became British Protectorates in 1892 and formed the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony (GEIC) in 1916. The Protectorate did not have a commitment to universal education nor funding in the Pacific, such as was

⁴ A. Talu, 2008, 'My History, My Calling' in *Telling Pacific Lives* (eds) B. V. Lal and V. Lukere: Prisms of Process, Canberra: ANU E Press, pp 117-138

provided to colonies in other parts of the globe. The colonial administration expected the Missions to shoulder the education of the people. This was not surprising since the Missions pioneered formal education in Kiribati thirty-five years before the GEIC was founded.

Once established, the colonial administration began to give the Missions grants in aid for their work. Lack of personnel, however compelled the ABCFM to withdraw from Kiribati in 1907 allowing the LMS free rein over the two groups. The colonial administration did assist with some teacher training. Both Missions had their own Training centres, the ABCFM in Kosrae 1882 and then the LMS took over in Rongorongo, Beru in 1900, the SHM at Manoku, Abemama in 1919 where they trained pastor-teachers and catechist-teachers for their village schools. Dissatisfaction with the Mission education programmes led to the colonial government establishing three government schools in the 1920s in order to meet the needs for trained public servants to assist in the administration of the colony.

What follows then considers the founding of the colonial administration, and its interaction with traditional forms of governance and leadership. The English language was so important to the colonial administration that it was utilised as a form of social control within the education system. The chapter examines the relationships between Island Schools and schools established by the colonial administration and the subsequent power plays between the missions and the colonial administration.

Though there was no secondary education prior to World War II the education in the Sacred Heart Mission schools on Butaritari, the Sisters' schools for girls of part European and Kiribati parents, and for Kiribati girls, and the boys' school run by Brother Englehart was considered of very good standard. Their life-span was ended by World War Two. St. Patrick's School in Tabiteuea and St. Joseph's College in Abaiang later produced men who formed the backbone of the colonial administration and the first House of Assembly after independence.

While the LMS began to relinquish its primary schools to the colonial government in the 1960s it was during the preparation for Independence that the Catholic mission handed over its primary schools to the government. Secondary education began almost ten years after World War II. On achieving independence in 1979 the Kiribati government inherited the only colonial government secondary school of King George V School (KGV) for boys and Elaine Bernarcchi School (EBS) for girls. These schools were established in 1953 and 1959 respectively.

One of the most remarkable effects of the War was in the area of education. There was a rush to get a limited number of students to attain the highest tertiary education possible to fit them for the responsibilities of national independence. These were sent to Fiji and a very few continued to New Zealand while the GEIC underwent after war reconstructions. In preparation for its secondary schools the colonial administration established primary schools that were supposed to provide a good and solid primary education and girls were included in these primary schools.

Possible uses of the research

I hope this research will be useful to those involved in Catholic education today as well as other educational bodies in Kiribati for considering future possibilities and directions. In 2008 an Education Summit held in Kiribati by the Ministry of Education⁵ reviewed the whole education system through asking what we want for our children today. The general consensus was that education was not only valuable as a means to employment and income generation, but was also a vehicle through which children can learn to be better I-Kiribati.⁶ The Summit concluded that there should be equitable educational provision for all children across church and government schools to redress this historical imbalance in the education system.

⁵ The Education Summit was initiated by the Association of Church Education Directors in Kiribati (CEDAK) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and was the first of its kind in Kiribati involving teachers, parents, island councils, women's clubs, churches, youth and education.

⁶ Such a philosophical underpinning has been echoed by indigenous female educators across the Pacific. See Dr Konai Helu Thaman, Dr Ana Taufe'ulugaki, Dr Unaisi Nabobo-Baba and Pricilla Puamau (USP).

I also hope this thesis will contribute to a greater recognition of the history and ongoing contributions of Catholic education, and encourage others to contribute towards a fuller history of its efforts.

Chapter content descriptions

Chapter 1: *Introduction.*

Chapter 2: *Socialisation and Education in Traditional Kiribati* presents Kiribati before contact and considers the processes and values within indigenous education systems.

Chapter 3: *The Arrival of the Missions* introduces the Christian Missions and their work of evangelization and involvement in early ‘formal’ education for both girls and boys.

Chapter 4: *Development of Catholic Education* explores the development of the early Catholic Schools and their contribution to the education of women and girls.

Chapter 5: *Catholic Education during the Colonial Period* discusses Catholic education in the former Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony and the ideologies and motivations for educating the Kiribati population. The Sacred Heart Mission discusses the evangelization process and formal education of children. Educated children were also developed as assets to the British colonial government’s administration.

Chapter 6: *The impact of World War Two on Education in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony* considers the changes in the education system initiated by the events of World War Two. Government post war primary schools included the education of girls.

Chapter 7: *The Founding and Development of Taborio* considers the Taborio curriculum and educational philosophies of the time as well as considering daily life, routines and identities at the school, co-education and Taborio’s transition to become Catholic Senior

College, staffing at the school and the importance of cultural literacy to teaching and learning, and curriculum development, education and employment.

Chapter 8: *Taborio and the Education of Kiribati Girls: A Quiet Revolution* focuses on Catholic education in Taborio where girls are given a holistic education, integrating academic learning and education about the realities of life in an island context. The conclusion contains a reflection on ‘Her-story’ in the context of the history of Catholic education, the importance of Catholic education in relation to women and girls. I ask whether Catholic education has made a difference in Kiribati.

Chapter 2

Socialisation and Education in Traditional Kiribati

Introduction

This chapter considers indigenous education in traditional Kiribati society. Traditionally, Kiribati education involved knowing through doing. The core values, knowledge, and skills necessary for life⁷ in an atoll environment were learnt through observing and listening, obeying and doing. So were community values, such as respect for the elders; obedience, humility and *silence*,⁸ industriousness and self-sufficiency, diligence and bravery also necessary for survival in a coral island setting. Clan knowledge was transmitted to younger generations in the areas of construction, fishing, toddy-cutting, cultivation, and navigation, weaving, healing and magic. Acquiring and transmitting knowledge of family genealogy and history was and continues to be essential in defending claims to land, the basic resource from which to ensure the welfare and survival of the family.

Definition of terms: 'Education'

In the Kiribati language the word for school is *te reirei* or *te kura*. *Te kura*⁹ refers more to the sense of location in the physical and place contexts in which learning takes place. The term for “learning” is *reirei*. Another word used for learning is *kamatebwai* and connotes study that involves rote learning while the latter means acquiring precise knowledge of something. This is precise learning in the sense that it is more than memorizing; it is knowing through doing or by experience. The term for “education” is *reirei*. The word for “teacher” is *te tia reirei* and for “teaching” is *reirei* or *te anga reirei*, the imparting of knowledge. The Kiribati words do not translate exactly into English. In

⁷ T. Teaero, 2003, ‘Indigenous Education in Kiribati’, in *Educational Ideas from Oceania*, Selected Readings, (ed) K.H. Thaman, The Institute of Education in association with the UNESCO Chair of Teacher Education and Culture, the University of the South Pacific. p 107

⁸ In the Kiribati context silence can mean many things, respect, maintaining egalitarianism, humility, etc. Here it means to safeguard the *kaainga*’s knowledge and skills.

⁹ Derived from the English word ‘school’.

Kiribati learning from the elders took place in the family. In community and institutions like the *mwaneaba*¹⁰ learning was conceptualized in a more holistic way as occurring across settings, generations and locations, learning from life. Culture was passed down from generation to generation in story-telling, dance and songs and other ways too.

At the apex of Kiribati indigenous education is '*te wanawana*, the stage when wisdom has been acquired'. '*Te wanawana* is knowing the customs' and the accompanied behaviour. The wise person in the Kiribati sense is one who 'is highly cultured and shows it in how she or he lives and behaves towards others.' In this sense '*te wanawana* applies in all areas of life with the proper use of knowledge, ability to conserve and diligent use of scarce resources'. This meant the appropriate use of knowledge and skill to real life situations for the benefit of the individuals and the community.¹¹

Kiribati parents and students quickly grasp the importance of a western education as a means of getting a job to earn a living on the islands where money is scarce. Today, when a person is 'educated' in the modern sense of the word with a high job in government, but does not know how to conduct herself or himself according to the local culture she/he is called *tiaki te oi n aomata*, (not a real person) or *te I-Matang* (a European) meaning she/he is a foreigner and therefore does not know the right and proper thing to do. Kiribati identity is not and was never located in the outcomes of the colonial/western education system, but formed through and within the community and assessed by them. The local people adopted western education after recognizing that it served a purpose, as a route to livelihood. Indigenous education is ongoing and resilient and continues in the home and family even though there have been inevitable modifications since contact.

A strong tradition of teaching considered gendered knowledge continues to the present day. Certain forms of knowledge and skills were regarded as female and passed exclusively to women. The same can be said about men, old and young. Such 'female'

¹⁰ Traditionally, the *mwaneaba*, a huge building made of local materials, was the centre of the social and political life on an island. Everyone had a genealogical sitting place, known as the *te boti*. Decisions passed by the *Old Men* under its roof were binding for all concerned. It was a place of refuge for anyone in trouble and visitors were received and entertained.

¹¹ Teairo, 'Indigenous Education in Kiribati' pp. 107 and 113

skills included weaving, special fishing on the reef and reef-mud, massaging, bone-setting, medicine, midwifery and magic. Skills regarded as the preserve of men included construction of houses, canoe building, toddy cutting, fishing, navigation, massaging, bone-setting, medicine and magic.¹² Although both women and men can specialize in bone setting, medicine and magic, the knowledge held varies substantially between different families who have their own special medicines and methods of massaging. Very few families, either in the past or today, possess the skill of bone-setting.

Society

The *kaainga* (clan or extended family) was and is the main social grouping in Kiribati society. The head of the *kaainga*, the *batua*, was elected by all the male members of the clan according to age, personality and leadership skills. Ideally, the head was always a man fully versed and learned in *kaainga* skills and knowledge. He also knows where to go if he lacks special expertise. The *batua*'s wife is responsible for leading the women and possessed similar specialist *kaainga* knowledge which could be shared with the other women. She worked in collaboration with her husband.

Traditional schooling in Kiribati was carried out in the nuclear family as well as in the extended family, the *kaainga*. There were different levels of skills and knowledge. Common skills included cutting toddy, fishing and building houses. Above these were skills that were considered the 'treasures' of the *kaainga*. Different clans held diverse skills in massaging, magic, navigation, fishing, weaving patterns, etc.¹³ These skills were passed down orally from generation to generation.

The selection of a person to be the repository of information and transmission of the *kaainga*'s specialist skills and knowledge rested with the current holder of the knowledge and skill. The criteria for selection include respect for the elders and the skill and knowledge, humility and discretion, as well as knowing when to make use of what have

¹² Teaero. 'Indigenous Education in Kiribati. p 107

¹³ Ibid. p 107

been entrusted to her or him for the benefit of the clan and the community. There was only one such person in the whole of the *kaainga* who would become a specialist in ‘closed’ knowledge. She or he was called *te boto*,¹⁴ the expert, and everyone would refer to her or him when there was a need from the community at large. *Te boto*, could be the *batua*, another elder or one of the siblings of the former holder of the skill.

When the *kaainga*’s knowledge or skill was required by members of other *kaainga* the keeper or holder of the knowledge would go himself to perform the required assignment or he could delegate the task to another person from the clan, but he himself would be directing the process of the work, such as construction work, or massaging. The young man selected to carry out the task was under the direction of the *kaainga* specialist. He was engaged in the process of being educated in the special skill of the clan. Traditional education in Kiribati was a life-long process. It was oral transmission committed to memory. In construction work the student had to put into practice what he was memorizing. In addition there was magic attached to it with its own regulations. Also because of the secrecy surrounding these family treasures their transmission was carried out on a one-to-one basis, teacher to student.

Each atoll in Kiribati was an entity in itself, with variations in culture. Dialects on each atoll were distinct although people from across the archipelago were largely able to make themselves understood. Island people identified themselves very strongly with the land on which they were born and considered themselves as I-Beru, *kain* Tabiteuea or I-Abemama though they often had relatives living on other islands. Songs and dances told of the origins of ancestors and their brave or not so brave deeds. In the atoll society there were custodians whose role was guarding these stories and ensuring that they were handed on to selected members of the next generation. Knowledge was not available to everyone and the keeper of the knowledge had to make crucial decisions about imparting it at the right time, to the right person and in the proper place and context.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 107-108

¹⁵ Teaero, ‘Indigenous Education in Kiribati’ p 109

Religious beliefs

Nareau was believed to be the god who created 'the earth, the sky, the sun, the moon and the stars'.¹⁶ After his work of creation there was a period of evolution when the inhabitants of the earth were spirits followed by a time when they reached the state of being half-spirit and half-human and then they became fully human.¹⁷ The names of the seven well-known spirits commonly worshipped by different clans were: *Auriaria*, *Tabuariki*, *Taburimai*, *Terakunene*, *Kaobunang*, *Nei Tituabine* and *Temamang*. Each had a totem,¹⁸ such as a shark, turtle, stingray, black noddy or other kinds of fish and birds.¹⁹ I-Kiribati practised ancestor-worship and consequently the killing and eating of the totem was strictly taboo. There was no overt practice of cannibalism in Kiribati although aspects of cannibalism practice could perhaps be observed when family members mourned their dead. To show their love and affection for the deceased, the sorrowing relatives would mix some of their food with the water that was dripping off the corpse that was left to take its course of decay in the middle of the house or *mwaneaba*.²⁰

In his book *Astride the Equator* the French historian, Sabatier²¹ presented these Kiribati gods and spirits as representations of the various waves of migrants that peopled the islands of Kiribati at different times and from whom the present day I-Kiribati descend.²² This was probable given the fact that like other Pacific islanders the Kiribati people practised ancestor-worship. In each *kaainga* there was a *bangota*, a shrine marked by a stone or stones. Here the ancestor was visited at certain times during the day, month or year usually by a male member of the clan, to bring offerings in the form of food and to ask for favours such as a good catch of fish, a victory in battle, or protection from the curses of others. The man who would fulfill this particular role within the family was

¹⁶ K. Bate, et. al. 1979. 'Tradition: Ancient Gilbertese Society', in *Aspects of History* (edit) A. Talu, Institute of Pacific Studies and Extension Services, University of the South Pacific and the Ministry of Education, Training and Culture, Kiribati Government. p 27

¹⁷ Ibid., p 27. E. Sabatier, 1939. *Astride the Equator: An Account of the Gilbert Islands* (Translated by Ursula Nixon from *Sous L'Equateur du Pacifique*), Melbourne Oxford University Press. p 55.

¹⁸ An embodiment of themselves in animal form

¹⁹ Bate, et. al. 'Tradition: Ancient Gilbertese Society' p 27. Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*. pp 55-57

²⁰ Bate, et. al. 'Tradition: Ancient Gilbertese Society' pp 26-27

²¹ Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*. pp 47-48

²² Ibid. p 48

chosen from by the former master, *te ibonga*, by virtue of personal qualities of being obedient and caring towards the elders and clan members. They were also selected in accordance with the principle that family heirlooms (land, skills, knowledge) be fairly distributed in order to ensure that each family member received something of the value of the *kaainga*. The person chosen according to these factors was then initiated and received his training accordingly.

Besides ancestor-worship the Kiribati people also practised *te tabunea*, magic or sorcery. Every family skill was accompanied by its own magic. So there was sorcery for construction and canoe building, cultivation of *bwabwai* plants, fishing, toddy cutting and for healing. Spells and incantations were used for obtaining favours in support and seeking protection in certain projects such as victory in battles, instilling in young men the virtue of courage and bravery, and in the War of love to win the heart of a loved one. Magic was also used for composing songs for certain occasions, to mark a historical event, to mourn the death of a loved one, or to compose a love song. *Tabunea* could also be invoked to avenge murder. When the person against whom the magic was directed was untouched, the usual interpretation for such phenomenon was that that person possessed more powerful magic.²³

I-Kiribati Values: The relationships between socialisation and behaviour

Respect for the elders and obedience are inseparable in the socialization of Kiribati children. Children were taught from an early age to respect their elders by listening to what they were asked or told to do. Carrying out their requests or instruction was a mark of obedience and respect. Humility was a valued trait and was shown in one's personal bearing in carrying out a task, and in dealing with others using the appropriate manners, attitude and speech. Hardwork and being self-sufficient were necessary in an environment with very few resources. Diligently attending to family needs for provisions and other necessary commodities such as mats for ceremonies, the manufacture of food

²³ Bate, et. al., 'Tradition, Ancient Gilbertese Society', pp 29-30.

items like *kamwaimwai* (cooked toddy) and the seasonal pandanus made into *tuae* and *kabubu* (cooked pandanus fruit) sustained the family and prevented them from being unduly or over-dependent on the rest of the clan. Self-reliance was the norm. Inter-dependence between clans was only expected when their special clan knowledge was called into play. Bravery was most important in keeping the good name of the family.

Ways of knowing: Reciprocity, listening and speaking on the Island of Beru

In researching the first *mwaneaba* built in Kiribati (undertaken in 1981), I visited the island of Beru in the south, as stories had it that the *Tabontebike mwaneaba* on the island was the first one to be built in Kiribati. Because of my identity as a Sister in the Catholic Church, access was easy to negotiate with individuals and communities. This personal experience further illustrates the ‘closed’ nature of some stories and knowledge in the Kiribati culture and the relationships and contexts in which these might be shared.

During the research I stayed with the Catholic Sisters in their house on the island of Beru and on our first evening Sister Callistus Flynn (an Australian) and I talked to the head catechist, Reo. Sister Callistus Flynn had spent so many years on Beru that she was considered a ‘grandmother’ to many of the young children on Beru who were children of her former students in school. Reo then arranged for us to meet with those elders who were the keepers of such stories for the island.

When we arrived in Taboiaki village, we could sense and feel the eyes of the villagers were on us. They were friendly but curious. The old man was there waiting for us on *te bwuia*, a local sitting house with the floor raised about one and a half feet above the ground on wooden posts. He called out his welcome: “*Karaki, karaki*,” which is “Come in”, and then “*Mauri*” as we shook hands. The greeting he offered is a word laden with wishes of life, good health and prosperity. We talked about my research while we waited for the other three men.

As soon as all was ready the women and the children disappeared leaving the four elders, Catechist Reo and myself. The old man in whose house we met was te *Tia taetae* (the speaker) and the other three were there and every now and then he would say to them, 'how is it?' and each responded 'keep going', 'keep going' thus providing encouragement of his knowledge and validating his account through their listening and acquiescent silence. When I thought I had heard enough, that I had all I needed to hear, I began to ask the questions for which I needed clarifications. I was deeply grateful. For without their help, sharing their heritage and their stories, giving of their time as well as their acceptance of me, I would have had nothing to write for the chapter I was writing at that time.

Stories regarding specific historical events concerning the whole island have custodians such as the one recited above. Some years later I read the book *The Evolution of the Boti*, by H.E. Maude, a former British administrator in the GEIC and authority on the history of the two island groups. The book is about the *Tabontebike mwaneaba*.²⁴ He wrote that the Kiribati *mwaneaba* on Beru, was Samoan in origin and that it was built around the 1400s with timber brought from Samoa when Tematawarebwe first arrived. I realized then the two accounts are identical with very little variation. What I have been given is the same as the one in *The Evolution of the Boti*. According to my informants the timber was brought from Samoa by sea at a time when the people were half spirit and half man. Perhaps men with the power of magic brought it in.

Identity and personhood in Kiribati are transmitted through genealogy. Knowledge of one's place, history and identity within a historical lineage provides a sense of belonging and of being rooted. Stories of spirits and ancestors were and continue to be told with an air of certainty. The custodian of the folklore might not be able to explain specific details of the story; however, these details are of less significance and value than the general message or content. The *mana* and weight of such genealogical stories are supported by

²⁴ H.E. Maude, 1963, *The Evolution of the Gilbertese Boti: An Ethnohistorical Interpretation*, Wellington, The Polynesian Society (Incorporated). Printed with permission by the Institute of Pacific Studies and Gilbert Islands Extension Centre of the University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji. p 11

the authority and respect for those chosen to be their custodians and to communicate them to others.

The significance and inheritance of land

Land everywhere signifies “wealth, prestige and social security”, and “to an I-Kiribati land was of high value”²⁵ Besides being a place of residence and livelihood, land, *bwabwai* pits, tools, skills, etc., constituted the heirloom that parents passed on to their children. Knowledge is intimately connected to the land. Every piece of land had a name and history attached to it. It was common for parents to send children to assist grandparents in their old age and to run errands for them. This had the function of giving the grandparents a share in the upbringing of their grand children, cementing family ties as well as keeping family ‘treasures’ intact.

Traditional land inheritance normally means the eldest received the best and biggest piece. Because the youngest child would inherit the least amount of family land, the knowledge of clan stories and family knowledge would be passed to the youngest family member. Knowledge was also seen as a form of wealth and therefore the passing of knowledge is a form of compensation for the imbalance in the inheritance of land. Knowledge could be translated into livelihood if, for example the knowledge passed down was a skill. Knowledge holders also have a societal advantage. If people want to access a part of it, when they ask for such a favour, this is known as *bubuti*. The *bubuti* or request would need to be accompanied by a gift that would be regarded as equal in value to the knowledge requested.²⁶ In terms of a skill, say, in canoe making, the canoe-maker and his whole household would be fed by the canoe owner.

²⁵ Bate, et.al., ‘Tradition: Ancient Gilbertese Society’ p 31

²⁶ Pers. comm. with Sister Aroita Tauti, May 31, 2008.

Socialisation and Education style

The Kiribati word for school or schooling or education, as indicated earlier, is *reirei* which literally means the acquiring or the imparting of knowledge. In the learning of songs and dances the word *rei* is used. *Rei* literally means to do or practise something over and over again until it is remembered and performed correctly. In other words, knowledge is learning through doing as in the acquiring of skills. We can see that knowledge has value if it is used. Kiribati indigenous education systems were primarily concerned with the learning and imparting of knowledge and skills that were directly related to life and survival. A child's first teachers were her or his parents, grandparents, and other members of the immediate family, the aunties and uncles. First children were taught to be polite and respectful of their elders. If they should pass in front of another person or a group of people, they were conditioned to say: *matauninga* - excuse me, or use the appropriate bodily gesture of bending forward the upper part of the body. This respect implied obedience. This respect involved listening to the elders and an unquestioning and uncritical acceptance of what one was told or taught.

Other acts where obedience was demonstrated included; the running of errands around the house, sweeping for the girls, and for both boys and girls collecting coconuts and firewood. Education for life was conducted mostly by observing their elders. Hence the young boys accompanied senior male members of their families to cut toddy or to the *bwabwai* pit to cultivate the *bwabwai* plants or the girls sitting watching the women preparing leaves for weaving or weaving itself. Thus the classroom consisted of real life situations. Skills for men were imparted by men and those for women by the women. And as the girl grew she would be introduced to cooking by first helping the mother, or aunty, or collecting straw from coconut leaves for making brooms. The boy would accompany the uncle to fish and when in the bush would be shown the boundaries of family lands.

Children's pastimes

Games that children played were ones they constructed out of the environment. *Te karekarawa* (meaning hitting the goal) was a game where the players drew circles or squares on the ground out in an open space and using a flat piece of stone which was thrown into a circle one at a time; the players could be any number from one to five. If there were over five players, another group would be formed with a separate game. Every player took a turn to play. Starting with the nearest circle until one completed the lot by throwing the flat stone of one's own choosing into the circle. If it landed outside of the circle the player was out for that round. If it landed well inside the circle the player hopped on one leg in to pick it up and returned to the starting point. Each circle was played in the same way. Another way of forfeiting a turn in playing was when the player fell while trying to balance on one leg and picking up the flat stone. The game continued until every player had had a turn. The first player to complete all the circles could then move and do the same starting from the other end.

Another popular game was collecting flowers or seeds and stringing them together with the midrib of the coconut fronds. Another one was called *te katiko* (which meant throwing and collecting) using shells or stones and a seed. The seed could be the very young nut of the coconut tree that did not mature and fell off the tree or the fruit of the non-tree. The shells were spread out in front of the player. The player threw up the seed and then tried to collect all the shells in her hands before the fruit came down. There was another game played by both boys and girls with a ball woven from pandanus leaves. Players could be from 2-15, the more the better for the game and the more interesting it became. Players stood in a circle with one in the middle. The middle player should be an expert in passing the ball to each player in turn. The ball was hit with the leg and not with the hand. The ball was hit to the clapping to see how long they could keep the ball up without dropping it. Little girls also made dolls from stringing fruit or leaves together or from using the roots of the pandanus tree. These games fostered muscle co-ordination and provided a little mental exercise. The modifications seen today are in the use of a volley-

ball instead of a ball made from coconut leaves, marbles instead of shells, and a tennis ball instead of fruits of the non-tree.

Gender Roles and Indigenous Education

Gender roles were clearly demarcated and the socialization of those gender roles began from birth. From an early age girls were often admonished not to climb trees because they were girls and climbing was for boys. The girls were always with their mothers and could not venture out too far from home without a chaperone. This practice sought to ensure the safeguarding of virginity for marriage. When a girl had her first menses she was confined to *te roki-ni-kako* house or 'bleach house' where she occupied her time with making string and weaving hidden as it were from the sun's direct rays as well as from the eyes of the community. Her grandmother or an aunty would be her constant companion to ensure she did it right. This was training in maturity and womanhood. The rest of the aunts kept her supplied with skirts made from chewed green coconut leaves for absorbing the flow. Her diet was restricted to dry coconut and water for the purpose of harnessing endurance for when she began having her own family. At the end of this period a great feast was held by both *kaainga* of her parents to celebrate the girl's coming of age.²⁷

Male children were more desired and highly valued because of the importance of land to survival in the patrilineal system of land inheritance. Boys were the providers for the family and through them the family name would be perpetuated. In a culture where land was acquired through warfare boys had to be brave and courageous. They had to be fearless warriors. For this reason a boy's training began soon after birth by the carrying out of certain rituals such as hair cutting and the taboo surrounding food. At every step of the way the little warrior had to be successful in fulfilling set tasks or the process had to start all over again. If he succeeded a huge celebration marked his achievement of the *rorobuaka* title,²⁸ announcing as it were that he was now a man. He was ready for life.

²⁷ Bate, et. al., 'Tradition: Ancient Gilbertese Society' pp 24-25.

²⁸ K. Kaoma, 1985. 'The Church and Education in Kiribati' BD thesis, Pacific Theological College, Suva,

Conclusion

Kiribati traditional beliefs and socialization were expressed mainly in the social strength and bond of the *kaainga* and within the *kaainga*. The *kaainga* was the primary institution of learning, and within it, knowledge and life-long skills were transmitted down the ages. Could learning take place outside or beyond the *kaainga*? In what form? With the arrival of missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century, the *kaainga*-oriented learning with its clearly gender-demarcated skills was about to be transformed but not entirely supplanted. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The context of Mission arrivals and education 1857-1900: conflicting ideologies

Introduction

This chapter examines the context in which the first three Christian Missions: the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the Catholic Sacred Heart Mission (SHM) arrived in Kiribati and how they adapted to the challenges they encountered. I will go on to describe the Missions work of converting the Kiribati people to Christianity. Kiribati was among the last group of islands to be evangelised in the Pacific because of its isolation, small size, and the fragmented nature of the atolls with their small populations. The missionaries saw the atoll environment as harsh; limited, and remote, with constant heat, without any cool season and with a lack of natural resources.

The important role of Hawaiian and Samoan missionaries in the work of evangelization, conversion, education and governance in Kiribati will also be discussed. The ABCFM sent very few white missionaries preferring the use of Hawaiian missionaries from the Hawaiian Evangelical Association, an offshoot of the ABCFM.²⁹ The LMS utilized Samoan missionaries who were deemed able to manage on their own except for the yearly visit of a white missionary on the *John Williams*, the Mission ship. The SHM European mission depended on the assistance of its new converts, Kiribati locals. Although initially less successful in its evangelization efforts than the LMS, the ABCFM and its pioneering leader, Bingham left a legacy to the people of Kiribati, in the form of a Bible in their own language, and a written language.³⁰

²⁹ H. E. Maude, and E. Doran, Jr. 1966., *The Precedence of Tarawa Atoll*, Australian National University, Canberra, and Texas A & M University, College State. Reprinted from Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 56, No. 2, June, 1966. A print out: pp 269-289

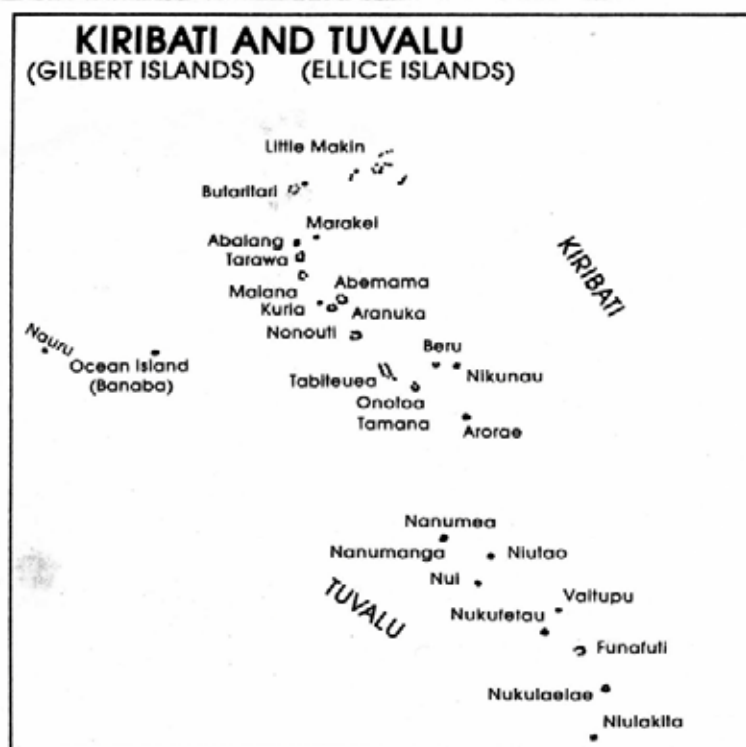
³⁰ Major F. G. L. Holland, 1937-38. *Annual Report of the Director of Education for the year 1937-38*. Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony. p 1

The Hawaiian and the Samoan pastors were accompanied by their wives on arrival in Kiribati, which were their daily support in the work of evangelization and education. Also, when the ABCFM headquarters and Morikao School were transferred to Kosrae in 1882 Kiribati boys and girls, were sent there for their education. As for the Sacred Heart Mission the girls were the Sisters' first priority from the time of their arrival in 1895.

This chapter also discusses the schools introduced by the missions. There was no evidence as to the inclusion of girls in the initial schools introduced by the ABCFM from 1857-1870s and the LMS since the 1870s. If the girls were not included in the very first established schools, they were taken in soon after.

This chapter also describes the ideological conflicts that arose between the missions already present in Kiribati on the arrival of the first Catholic missionaries.

Map of Kiribati and Tuvalu³¹



³¹ J. Garratt (1982) *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*, World Council of Churches in association with the Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Geneva and Suva, Oceania Printers Ltd., Suva, Fiji. p.149

ABCFM missionaries' arrival

On 17 November, 1857, the *Morning Star* brought the first missionaries of the (ABCFM) to Kiribati. Abaiang was the chosen site for the mission because of its more central position and proximity to the bigger and more populous islands of Tarawa, Maiana and Marakei.³² The first party was composed of Reverend Hiram Bingham, his wife Clarissa Bingham and a Hawaiian pastor, Kanoa and his wife, Kaholo.³³ Welcomed by Chief Temaua of Abaiang they received land for a mission station.³⁴ However, like all pioneers in any field the first encounter involved challenges of all kinds. In this case the contact was between three communities – all strangers – with little prior knowledge of each other. The presence of the Hawaiian missionaries added a novel dimension to the enterprise.

The Hawaiian missionaries

The contribution of the Hawaiian pastors was significant. Bingham was able to concentrate on the translation of Scriptures and hymns because his Hawaiian fellow workers preached and explained the Good News to the Kiribati people.³⁵ Evangelisation was a corporate undertaking and every one had a role to play.

Hawaiians were able to move between different groups and identities with much greater ease than American missionaries and provided a cultural conceptual bridge between the Kiribati population and missionaries at first contact. Neither white nor local, the Hawaiians moved within these two groups of people with greater ease because of their own island origins. They understood the Kiribati culture, customs, and way of life better than their fellow white missionaries. It is likely that locals could also identify with the

³² Maude and Doran, Jr., *The Precedence of Tarawa Atoll*. p 277

³³ Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*. p 149

³⁴ B. K. Macdonald, 1982, *Cinderellas of the Empire: Towards a history of Kiribati and Tuvalu*, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji. p 33

³⁵ Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*. p 152

Hawaiians better than they could with Hiram Bingham and his wife, or Reverend Taylor later on.

The initially small congregation of less than twenty in 1861 did not discourage Bingham. After visiting the other islands in the north and the central atolls, Bingham recruited more Hawaiian missionaries. By this time the white missionaries were not volunteering for the Kiribati mission due to the harsh and inhospitable environment, isolation and lack of resources. Perhaps Bingham was aware that the Hawaiians could manage well in Kiribati. Eventually there were Hawaiian pastors on seven islands from Butaritari in the north to Tabiteuea in the south to continue the work of evangelization. However, as non-locals, their lives could be in danger just like any outsiders. In 1866 when King Kaiea of Butaritari 'killed three Hawaiian sailors the Hawaiian missionaries were saved by trader Randell's personal influence and intervention.'³⁶ The white missionaries were viewed by the locals as the owners of trade and technology and as masters of the new religion. The Hawaiian pastors, moreover, could be both outsiders as missionaries and insiders as Pacific islanders. Through their islander identity they were able to successfully integrate and contextualize the gospel within their evangelical work. Their lot was that of the 'silent' worker, and their crucial role in processes of conversion is often unacknowledged in historical accounts.

An outbreak of district rivalries among chiefs occurred on Abaiang in 1869 and the mission station was razed to the ground. The Hawaiian pastor on the island at that time, named Mahoe, was seriously injured.³⁷ There was no explanation of why Mahoe nearly lost his life. Was it because he survived that people were content and therefore quickly forgot the incident? Similarly there is no written explanation of the drowning of another Hawaiian missionary, named Haina, in the following year,³⁸ nor any explanation of what he was doing at sea.

³⁶ H. E., Maude, and I., Leeson, 1965, 'The Coconut Oil Trade of the Gilbert Islands', *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, Volume 74 No 4 December 1965. p 415

³⁷ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*. p 35. Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*. p 151

³⁸ Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*. p 152

One Hawaiian pastor on the island of Tabiteuea, named Kabu, did have special mention in relation to the religious wars on Tabiteuea in 1879. These wars were the first on Kiribati soil where relatives fought each other.³⁹ Kiribati wars were normally over land and they were between *kaainga*. The Hawaiian missionaries seem to have left behind no written account about their work as missionaries in terms of their experiences and impressions and the people of Kiribati at the time. Perhaps their oral past and the largely oral cultures in which they were working did not encourage them to write their missionary activities.

The lack of acknowledgement of the crucial role that Pacific Island missionaries played in the process of evangelization and conversion in Kiribati, coupled with the absence of their own accounts leads to the conclusion that Pacific island missionaries were regarded as second rate to white missionaries. The historical accounts do not provide us with anything other than the bare facts of where these missionaries were stationed, for example in Northern Kiribati, but we know nothing about what they did or what they thought. Hawaiian missionaries were undoubtedly useful in assisting the white missionaries' in their evangelization work at the time. Their presence meant that European missionaries were generally able to pass through the islands very quickly, and undertake a supervisory role rather than having to deal with the hardships of daily life on the atolls. The European and Hawaiian missionaries were 'worlds apart'. One came from roots immersed in centuries of Christianity while the others were newly converted within the last twenty years. There was no doubt that the islander missionaries contributed significantly in shouldering the majority of the daily work of missionary life, as well as sharing their cultures with their Kiribati hosts to whom they ministered and contextualized the gospel.

If the first group of LMS evangelizers who came out on the *Duff* to Tahiti in 1797 was mostly ordinary Christians and not ordained ministers,⁴⁰ perhaps this informality

³⁹ H. C. and H. E. Maude; 1981, 'Tioba and the Tabiteuean Religious Wars', *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, September, Vol. 90 No. 3, pp.318-323. Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*, p 38

⁴⁰ W. N. Gunson, 1978; *Messengers of grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas*, 1797-1860.

communicated to the potential converts the idea that the Christian life embraces all people from different walks of life and that evangelisation is not restricted to the clergy. In Tahiti and then in the Cook Islands the few European evangelisers were ‘overseers’, ‘teachers’ and ‘pastors’.⁴¹ The emergence of a local ministry was attributed to the readiness of indigenous for leadership and for ministry roles in the Church. European pastors encouraged the indigenous people’s eagerness and zeal to participate in the ministries of the church by recruiting, training and supervising them.⁴²

The Maohi (or Tahitians) advocates of the Protestant faith were sent as teachers to convert the Southern Cook Islanders by the 1820s. In 1830 a mixed group of Maohi and Cook Island Evangelizers arrived in Samoa where they were happily welcomed by the chiefs and the people. By 1839 the first group of Samoan teachers left for the foreign mission. There was eagerness on the part of the locals to welcome the new faith, they were keen to learn to read and write as well as share with each other what they had learnt. There was that great desire to welcome the new faith.⁴³

European leaders saw the Maohi evangelizers as ‘indifferently qualified’ and ‘rarely satisfactory’ with ‘limited knowledge’ who were ‘unable to distinguish between ecclesiastical and political power’,⁴⁴ they had expected too much without giving them the training they definitely required before sending them off to be evangelizers. Being a Christian is a way of life and virtues need to be internalized and lived daily. Perhaps the indigenous advocates of the new faith were not too far from the first group that was sent out and who were said to have been ‘unacceptable’ for the mission in their home country.⁴⁵

Oxford University Press, Melbourne. p 12

⁴¹ R. Lange, R. Lange, 2005. *Island Ministers: indigenous leadership in nineteenth century Pacific Island Christianity*, A.N.U. Canberra: Pandanus Books. p 321 p 321

⁴² Ibid. p 321

⁴³ R. Lange, 1997. *The origins of the Christian ministry in the Cook Island and Samoa*, Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. p 5

⁴⁴ Ibid. p 5

⁴⁵ Gunson, *Messengers of grace*, p 97

Adapting to life in an atoll environment: Resource scarcity and Hawaiian responses to the challenges of living in Kiribati

When Hawaiian missionaries in Kiribati left they were not replaced and that led to the closing down of the ABCFM mission. During their time in Kiribati they also lacked adequate training and preparation for missionary work in the areas of education and theology. Visiting European supervisors visiting in the 1880s and 1890s were often ‘scandalized’⁴⁶ by the Hawaiian missionaries because of their involvement in trading activities with the Kiribati people. It is very difficult to know whether they were doing it to earn their livelihood or simply trying to make some extra money for themselves.

The Hawaiian missionaries did not have lands on these atolls to farm, nor could they fish! They came from bigger islands where they kept livestock and perhaps engaged in river fishing. The absence of written material about these silent workers means that we can only guess how they supported themselves. Were they perhaps supported by the new converts? This is perhaps unlikely as they were not numerous. Would the supply of food delivered by the *Morning Star* or the *Bingham* able to sustain them until the following annual visit? Were they paid? And how much were they paid? Would this amount be sufficient for all their needs? The local people frequently faced shortages of resources themselves. Besides the communities’ own needs for coconuts, quite a number were required for producing coconut oil for trade. There is no record of how much coconut oil chiefs in the north and central areas of Kiribati demanded per family. There is a need for some answers to these questions before determining the seriousness of the Hawaiian missionaries’ involvement in trade. The pioneering LMS missionaries in Tahiti had also been involved in trading for their living and for their missionary work.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*. p 39

⁴⁷ H. E., Maude, 1968, *Of Islands and Men: Studies in Pacific history*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, pp 216-218

Barriers to evangelization work

War was a substantial barrier to the evangelization work of the ABCFM missionaries. Rivalries between the district chiefs on Abaiang, and between Abaiang and Tarawa were an issue throughout the 1850s and 1860s. The sale of alcohol and arms as well as the widespread use of sour toddy added to the problems of war and violence.

Chief Kaiea of Abaiang who was in power at the time of Reverend Bingham, was in a precarious position as his power was dependant on declining popular support. He was significantly influenced by other powerful chiefs and traditional leaders who discouraged him from converting to Christianity; so he was not able to provide sufficient support or security to the missionaries or to rally support for their cause, as to do so would place his position as paramount chief under threat. Kaiea had to heed the wishes and advice of his supporters. His main interest was in the missionaries' usefulness as foreigners, owners of the new trade and technology that had enhanced his position.⁴⁸ Arms had consolidated the powers of the chiefs especially on Butaritari, Abaiang and Abemama, making them more despotic.

The friendship between Bingham and chief Kaiea did not influence his people to embrace the new religion. Kiribati customs made this quite impossible. Although it would be in line with customs for a chief to request personal assistance for a cause, he could not use his status to influence people's belief. In Kiribati, telling others what to do is unacceptable and even chiefs would need a very valid reason for doing so. Kiribati people lived very closely with their gods and invariably would take time to change into a new belief; especially when the new belief would be in a god who seemed far away as 'in heaven' and whose words, messages and laws were contained in a book written in a foreign language, and largely about a foreign people and land.

⁴⁸ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*. p 35

Rules for behaviour established by the ABCFM

In 1859, Bingham built the first Christian church in Kiribati. He paid wages and supervised the construction himself without assistance from the local people. Though the chapel was built to accommodate a congregation of 300, the few who availed themselves of the initial opportunity did so more through curiosity. Rules for new converts, such as ‘no song, no dance, no tobacco, no liquor’,⁴⁹ were not popular. The missionaries were taking the ‘spice’ of life away from local converts in attempts to turn them into hard working and faithful church-goers. As a consequence of the different values and behaviours demanded by missionaries, very few I-Kiribati met the standard.

The missionaries also objected to the local practices of dancing with its accompanied magic. In Kiribati culture composing a song is an important art, a way of communicating history and marking cultural identity. Similarly Kiribati dancing is an art and children are taught dances from a very young age. These art forms are part of long held traditions in the Pacific. Through dance and song, history, identity and culture are preserved and passed down. Bingham failed to appreciate the significance of dance and song in Pacific culture and identity. His missionary zeal made him impatient; he expected instant conversion. He did not appreciate the fact that new converts needed to be free to choose for themselves as well as time to digest and internalize church doctrines. Despite an initial lack of interest, all was not lost: Bingham baptized his first two converts on March 31, 1861.

Mrs. Bingham was an asset to the mission and supported her husband with his writing; she also wrote books and teaching resources for the pastors on other islands. The mission’s first printing machine from America was used in the production of school materials from the first school on Koinawa.⁵⁰ When Bingham had to leave for Hawaii in 1875 he continued his work of translating the Bible. He was replaced by Reverend Taylor on Abaiang. Rev. Taylor lost both his first and second wives, who were sisters, and after

⁴⁹ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*, p 39

⁵⁰ Kaoma, ‘Church and Education in Kiribati’ p 37

his bereavement and departure there was no forthcoming replacement. The ABCFM headquarters and the school were moved to Kosrae in 1882⁵¹ where there would be more resources. From then on the mission and the Hawaiian pastors were occasionally visited by a European missionary on the mission ship, the *Bingham* that brought supplies of food, school material, moral support and encouragement.

Bingham's missionary companions, Reverends Taylor, Walkup and Channon and the Hawaiian missionaries: Reverends Kanoa, Mahoe, Nalimu, Kapu, Maka, Leleo, Nua, Haina and Kanoho and their wives all had their part to play. Rev Walkup lost his own life in the course of the work. Indifference, more than anything else, was what constituted resistance to the missionaries in the early years of their work. There was lack of enthusiasm for both church services and schooling. The medium of instruction in Church and schools was the Kiribati language because the Mission's main focus was imparting the Good News in the people's own language for clarity and understanding. Bingham did not achieve any mass conversions and his health did not allow him to remain on the islands for long. Nevertheless, he was a pioneer who broke new ground. Perhaps it could be said that his work prepared the northerners who were less exposed to foreigners and less interested in the new religion for further conversion. When the Catholic missionaries arrived in the North they were the second wave of missionaries to the area and were accepted much more openly by the people there than the ABCFM missionaries before them.

The London Missionary Society and the impact of Samoan Missionaries 1870s

The London Missionary Society (LMS) sent Samoan missionaries to bring Christianity to the southern atolls of Beru, Onotoa, Nikunau, Tamana and Arorae, after initially converting the people of Tuvalu in 1868.⁵² Compared to their Hawaiian counterparts, the Samoans were sent out without European missionaries to supervise them. Although they

⁵¹ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*. p 36

⁵² Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*. pp 153 and 155.

were visited by missionaries on the *John Williams* on its annual visits they were more likely to have felt that they were in charge of the work. They knew the Kiribati people and their progress in the faith substantially better than the visiting personnel. They had ownership of the work while the Hawaiians were seen as just helpers. Due to this independence and ownership of the conversion process the Samoan missionaries were more successful in effecting a change from traditional beliefs to belief in the new Christian God. This success also had a lot to do with the ingenuity of the missionaries themselves and the local circumstances. A very important event took place at this point which affected the pace of conversion and local demographics. Traders from South America, initially heading for Melanesia, stopped in Polynesia and Micronesia, and recruited labourers for the Peruvian mines.⁵³

In 1863, from the atolls in south Tuvalu the Peruvian *blackbirders* made off with 250 persons from the Nukulaelae estimated population of 300, and 171 people from Funafuti's total population of 300. They were enticed aboard the ships by false promises that they would be safely returned to their islands. Two years later there were still more women than men on both islands.⁵⁴ Such decimation of the male population and the removal of fathers and husbands must have been devastatingly depressing for the women, children and the elderly who were left behind. In their search for new meaning in life the people of Nukulaelae and Funafuti must have viewed the missionaries as 'saviours' and their message as one of great hope.

The Samoan Approach to Conversion and Evangelisation

The Samoan missionaries' approach was a whole way of life conversion. They had contextualized Christianity into their existing socio-cultural system and adopted a system that was similar to the *matai* system within their own society. As missionaries they took this approach to the islands that they went to evangelise. As missionaries and strangers in

⁵³ H. E. Maude, 1981, *Slavers in Paradise: The Peruvian labour trade in Polynesia, 1862-1864*, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji. pp 76-78

⁵⁴ R. Bedford, B. Macdonald, D. Munro, 1980, 'Population Estimates for Kiribati and Tuvalu, 1850-1900: Review and Speculation', *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, Vol. 89 No. 2 June 1980. pp 213-214

the islands they were assigned to, the Samoans were extremely successful in converting local people and therefore gaining their support and this included support in terms of material resources. It seemed that the Samoans expected their needs to be fully met by their new converts, and it is likely that concepts of Christian charity were actively encouraged. Perhaps the tradition of Pacific island hospitality and culture of reciprocity was also utilized by the Samoan missionaries. In both Kiribati and in Tuvalu, strangers on an island are always welcomed and treated with respect. When adopted into a family, a person becomes a member of the *kaainga*, and when this is coupled with also belonging to the newly conceived Christian family this was a significant force and influence.

Similar to the Hawaiians and the Maohi in the Cook Islands and later in Samoa the Samoan missionaries were in a better position to understand their fellow islanders in spite of the cultural differences. As new converts themselves they were fired with zeal, enthused to share their new found faith and were ready to do anything to effect that. In addition to their faith was the confidence gained from the ease through which they succeeded in converting the Tuvaluans, who were closer in culture to the Samoans

At the same time, the Samoan pastors had ‘heralds’ who prepared people to accept the Christian God in most of the islands in Tuvalu. One of these heralds was a man named Elekana, he and some companions got drifted and arrived in Nukulaelae in 1861, another was an unnamed Tokelauan on Funafuti prior to 1865 when the first official visitation took place, a Hawaiian Christian on Nukufetau preceeded the Samoan pastors, an unknown Christian had also taught the locals the Lord’s prayer on Vaitupu. On Nui the people had in their possession Hiram Bingham of the ABCFM’s hymn books, the Gospels of Matthew and John and the Epistle to the Ephesians. The people of Nui also heard about the Christian God through the beachcomber, Bob Waters. Niutao, Nanumaga and Nanumea were the only islands that did not want to receive Christian teachings. On Nanumea the work of conversion was carried out by two indigenous who had become Christians on other islands. Nanumaga continued to reject Christian teachings until 1875,⁵⁵ at this point the rest of the islands had almost uniformly accepted Christianity.

⁵⁵ L. Kofe, 1983, ‘Palagi and Pastors’, in *Tuvalu, A History*, (ed) H. Laracy, et. al. Institute of Pacific

The Samoan missionaries' first task was to preach to make converts, and then teach them to read and write. For their schools the Samoan missionaries held classes for at least two hours every day except Sunday; however, school hours and standards depended largely on the interest and competency of the individual pastors. Their oral heritage meant that the Samoans preferred the use of their own language. In Tuvalu the consequence of this was that the Samoan language became the language of church and school. In the southern Kiribati atolls the Bible prepared by Rev. Bingham and the ABCFM was used alongside the Samoan texts.⁵⁶

Compared to Tuvalu it took longer for the Kiribati people in the south to accept Christianity and the Samoan missionaries were forced to learn the Kiribati language in order to be successful. People from Southern Kiribati had the experience of trading with whalers for the last four decades, as well as having been plantation labourers in Tahiti, Samoa, Hawaii and Fiji since the 1860s.⁵⁷ These experiences had expanded the world view of these southerners, and they were not unduly overawed by the Samoans. Whilst in Tuvalu, Samoan missionaries had no difficulties in gaining the support of the island authority of chiefs. In southern Kiribati it took them a while to obtain access to the authority of the *mwaneaba* government. Once the missionaries gained acceptance in the *mwaneaba* government the people were eventually won over. The missionaries' teachings and regulations were accepted in place of traditional shrines and ancestors' skulls that were destroyed and buried.

The LMS policy was to make 'churches the centre for all village activities'.⁵⁸ With encouragement from pastors the new converts left the old *kaainga* homesteads and built themselves new residences close to the church. This was the beginning of the breakdown

Studies and Extension Services, University of the South Pacific and the Ministry of Social Services, Government of Tuvalu; pp 109-117

⁵⁶ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*; p 42

⁵⁷ A. Onorio, 1979 'I-Matang: Early European Contacts', in A. Talu, (ed). *Aspects of History*, Institute of Pacific Studies and Extension Services, University of the South Pacific and the Ministry of Education, Training and Culture, Kiribati Government; pp 52 and 54

⁵⁸ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*. p 44

of the old *kaainga* small villages with the resulting effect that islands which previously had many small villages were reduced to having only two villages with the school, the church and the pastor's house located in between. Remnant of this type of arrangement is still visible today throughout the islands of Tuvalu; and Tamana and Arorae in Kiribati. With this substantial change in living arrangements new relationships were formed based on religious allegiance rather than the previous system of family units who lived in close proximity because of genealogical ties. Literacy became an essential 'requirement for church membership'⁵⁹ and access to the inner circle of the new village society.

Rules instituted by the LMS

Sabbath observance was made compulsory; with the exception of cooking for the sick, any type of work was prohibited with fines for non-compliance. Sunday cooking was done on Saturdays. Church goers were to wear clothes with special uniforms for office bearers. Wearing hats to church was made compulsory for women as was the practice amongst white missionaries in Samoa. In church, seating was allocated on gender basis. School children were placed close to the front under the close supervision of local deacons.⁶⁰

Following closely some of the principle views of the Evangelical movement, the Samoan missionaries were successful in 'moulding their environment in accordance with their own convictions'.⁶¹ Clothing was closely associated with western civilization. It was too soon for the locals to be actively critical about the essential and non-essential messages of the new religion. Pastors were similarly ill-equipped with the knowledge and methods to deal with Kiribati and Tuvalu cultural matters in their work of evangelization.⁶²

The locals were obedient to the missionary's message as they were convincing in their proclamation of the Word of God. School played a significant part in conversion as they

⁵⁹ Ibid. p 43

⁶⁰ Ibid. p 44

⁶¹ Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*. p 34

⁶² Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*. p 101

were a novelty. Perhaps due to fear of *blackbirders* and of being forced to leave the islands for work elsewhere, the people sought refuge in the church. A majority of southern Kiribati also converted because of pressure to conform and to belong. It was not acceptable to be an outsider among people who lived closely on small atolls and were genealogically related.

Samoan Missionaries and Governance

With the success of the Samoan LMS missionaries began the steady and gradual evolution of new governments on the atolls they occupied. Pastors selected deacons from those who already held authority within local communities. The power of the deacons depended on what the pastor would allow. Deacons in turn appointed policemen whose responsibilities were to ensure compliance and impose fines for things such as non attendance of church. Single fines amounted up to 200 coconuts and as fines were given for petty and minor offences people had no option but to comply with the missionaries and their regulations.

The election of deacons and appointment of police to impose pastor-made regulations was the beginning of village councils. These gradual changes and developments in governance and the law were adapted by the Protectorate and the Colonial government.⁶³ Because the population in island councils were mostly Protestants the early colonial administration had to gradually remove the power of the pastors.

The Sacred Heart Mission

In the midst of Protestant conversion in Kiribati in 1888, European Catholic missionaries arrived at the request of two men who were instrumental in bringing Catholicism to Kiribati. Betero Terawati and Rataro Tiroi of Nonouti had been exposed to the Catholic religion during their time as indentured labourers in Tahiti. They had embraced the

⁶³ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*. p 47

Catholic faith under the pastoral care and direction of Bishop Stephen Janssen in Tahiti.⁶⁴ Bishop Stephen had sent them back to Kiribati to be missionaries to their own people in 1881. Betero and Rataro had been leading prayers in the small Catholic community but as they were not priests they were unable to administer the sacraments. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSCs) accepted and responded to their request.

On Nonouti Betero Terawati and Rataro Tiroi had gathered a number of followers for the Catholic faith, and built eight churches of local materials; timber was sourced from the coconut trunk and pandanus tree, roofing from sewn pandanus leaves, and string from coconut fibre. The French trader, Frank Even, who was also a Catholic and lived on Nonouti, Even helped Betero and Rataro to write to Monsignor Lamaze, the Apostolic Vicar for Central Oceania, who was based in Samoa, to ask for priests.⁶⁵ In Rome the request for missionaries was directed to the ‘little Society’⁶⁶ of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Chosen for this mission were Father Edward Bontemps, Father Joseph Leray, and Brother Conrad Weber who were welcomed by the 560 newly baptized and 600 Catechumens in Nonouti on the 10th May, 1888.⁶⁷

These Missionaries of the Sacred Heart had a specific mission to go out to bring the love of God to people everywhere especially those who have never heard of the love of the Christian God. The Founder of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart had a clear vision for the so-called ‘far away’ missions. The training and personal associations that Bontemps, Leray and Weber had with the founder, Father Chevalier, MSC., and the early members of the MSC society in Europe, meant that they were full of zeal and passion for the evangelization of the Kiribati people. This intimate and inspirational contact with the founding Father explains the unflagging enthusiasm and dedicated commitment with which each of these early missionaries, priests, brothers and sisters who followed them to Kiribati, went about their tasks. Nothing was too small, nothing too insignificant, nothing too big that it was insurmountable when it was an issue of winning souls for God.

⁶⁴ Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*. p 168

⁶⁵ Ibid. p 169. Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*; p 50. Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*. p 289

⁶⁶ The founder of the society Father Chevalier always referred to the society as our ‘little’ society.

⁶⁷ Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*. p 176

As the leader of this small delegation Father Bontemps with the help of Brother Conrad travelled on trading ships, visiting the different islands to convert and to baptize those who welcomed the faith. In the mission headquarters on Nonouti, Father Leray believed in leading by example and ensured that the new converts knew the contents of the catechism. He travelled the islands, staying at villages for three to four days. On his visits a conch shell was sounded at 6 a.m. for prayers followed by Mass and catechetical classes. These were followed by classes in reading, arithmetic, singing and games.⁶⁸ These were the very beginnings of Catholic education in Kiribati.

The challenge of ministering to the scattered Catholic community in Kiribati: conflicting ideologies

Christianity carries the most significant and important fundamental criteria which is at the basis of life, namely love. Christ underwent excruciating sufferings which culminated in his own mortal death at the hands of the ruling foreign power and at the wish of the religious and civil authority of his country. Since then Christianity's beginning anywhere has been marked by tensions, disharmony and divisions within countries and among families. The process of conversion involves a radical change in culture, practices and values. Although Christianity continues to be extremely popular in the Pacific and conversion has been widespread, a history of conflict has accompanies this process of change. Christian history began with conflict and revolution and this is re-enacted in every generation in one way or another. It was not any different in the small islands of Kiribati.

In these early and ground-breaking missionary trips, Catholic Missionaries encountered significant opposition from the Protestant missionaries.⁶⁹ By virtue of being amongst the first missions to arrive in Kiribati, both the ABCFM and LMS regarded the Catholic

⁶⁸ 'The life of Bishop Leray', unpublished. OLSH Archives, Teoraereke, Tarawa. Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*. p 93

⁶⁹ The conflicts have been dealt with in detail by Sabatier in *Astride the Equator*; these few are just to explain the nature of the conflicts for this paper.

missionaries as interlopers. The Catholic missionaries, however, viewed as their responsibility to tell the Kiribati people about the Catholic faith, thereby giving them the chance to select the belief they wished to adopt. It is the inherent right of every human being to a religion of their choice and this involves being well informed.

The missions' methods of evangelization differed significantly. ABCFM and the LMS focused a great deal on regulating external appearances and behaviours, strictly dictating details about dress and lifestyle for their followers. Catholic missionaries were more lenient to things which were not permitted in the Protestant faith such as local dancing, tobacco use and liquor consumption. The Catholic missionaries had never encountered such a land of scarcity as they found in Kiribati compared to their homelands. From their own poverty they thought that they should look after themselves; paid for food and building materials. To the new converts they gave out books, medals and holy pictures as gifts. They also used tobacco for gifts or payment for services rendered.⁷⁰ The Catholic missionaries concentrated more on the internal, the inner person. They were concerned that their converts understand matters of Christian morals, and their focus was to develop a conscience in their followers, to cultivate an internal sense of what is evil in itself and what becomes evil from the use man makes of it.

In the process of evangelization the personality of the individual who carries the Good News and how this is communicated is crucial to how peacefully that message will be received. This is perhaps illustrated by the presence of conflict between Samoan Protestant pastors on the islands of Beru, Nikunau, Butaritari, Tabiteuea and the absence of accounts of conflict between the same groups on the islands of Onotoa and Marakei and the others in their early encounters. For example, in Father Bontemps' first trip to the island of Onotoa in 1892 he was made very welcome by the Protestants under the leadership of their Samoan pastors.⁷¹

⁷⁰ MacDonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*, p 51

⁷¹ Lynch, 'Bokin te Tienture', p 44

Another example of early ideological conflict was recorded within Father Bontemps first trip to Beru in 1892. Beru was previously an LMS stronghold, and Father Bontemps was the first Catholic to visit the island. Father Bontemps lodged overnight with a Chinese trader on arrival. The next day when he prepared to say Mass in the *mwaneaba*, a group of elder men came in to see what he was going to do. Just as Father Bontemps was about to say Mass, Samoan teachers arrived and almost chased him out. A man by the name of Nake, a Beru local, took pity on Father Bontemps and invited him to his home where he was able to celebrate Mass. The consequence of this hospitality for Nake was that he was banished from Beru by the Samoan pastors and the senior men of the island. Nake was exiled in Tabiteuea for two years. On his return to Beru he was able to live as a Catholic until his death in 1902.⁷²

Another account of ideological conflict on the island of Beru occurred in 1897 when Brother Boniface arrived. The ship that brought him arrived on a Sunday. The Samoan teachers and a policeman representing the Protestant Church⁷³ were there to tell him he was not allowed to carry his luggage to his house on a Sunday. Brother did not heed their warning. He managed to get all his belongings to his little house before night fall.⁷⁴

In 1930 there was a huge conflict between the sole Catholic member of the local government in Onotoa, and the LMS over two-thirds of the population. The June-due government tax coincided with the LMS mission tax in April. The Catholic magistrate responsible for attempting to recoup taxes from the local community and his insistence that it should be paid on time was seen as an attack on their religion.⁷⁵ His voice was met with strong dislike and opposition from the local Protestants. He and the other Catholics were accused of being an obstacle to the second coming of Christ and therefore to the gates of heaven. This conflict occurred after days of continuous praying and dream

⁷² Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*, pp. 244-245. Lynch 'Bokin te Tienture', p 17

⁷³ Government officials in Kiribati at this time were Protestants and hostile to the arrival of the Catholic faith. It is likely that the policeman in this story was closely linked to the Protestants.

⁷⁴ Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*, pp 244-45. Lynch, 'Bokin te Tienture', pp 18-19

⁷⁵ Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*; pp 256-261. Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*; pp 130-131

interpretations by the Protestant community. It was perhaps an incidence of hysteria caused by the combination of a lack of sleep and nourishment, coupled with misunderstanding about the causes of the second coming.⁷⁶

Conflicts between the Catholic and Protestant Education Systems

Nikunau was the second island to be visited by Catholic missionaries in 1888 and one of the islands where the Catholic missionaries met strong opposition from the Samoan pastors and the Protectorate administration. Soon after arrival on Nonouti in 1888, Catholic missionaries were invited to Nikunau by a French Catholic trader, Frank Even. He and the other local Catholics with him were being 'persecuted' by the Protestants, but the nature of this was not explained. Though the missionaries did not stay long on the island, Father Bontemps managed to get some locals baptised. The small community on Nikunau was again visited by Father Gressin in 1896 whence he brought two catechists from Nonouti to work for the community of 389 baptised Catholics. The members of the small community were vulnerable with no leader. The Resident Commissioner visited Nikunau and in inquiring about the number of Catholics only a few had enough courage to own up to being Catholics. Campbell considered their number negligible and thereby banned the Catholic religion on the island. Consequently, the community was disbanded, the mission house taken over by the local government, the Catholic school closed down, and the two catechists were returned to Nonouti.⁷⁷

In 1899, Bishop Leray decided to reopen Nikunau. He accompanied the first resident priest, Father Quoirier and two Sisters, Baptiste and Clementine to the island. They were not welcomed. The people were neither allowed to visit nor to offer any kind of assistance to the Catholic missionaries. Their luggage was left on the beach and had to be guarded over night. Irish trader Smith took pity on them and gave them shelter. On

⁷⁶ Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*; p 236. Lynch, 'Bokin te Tienture', p 13

⁷⁷ Combined letter by Sisters Baptiste and Clementine to Mother Marie Louise and the Sisters in France, November 1, 1899. Egan, Sister Helena, 1980s? A history of the Foundation of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in the Gilberts, p 3 [11 Loose typed pages stapled together] OLSH Archives, Teoraereke, Tarawa. Lynch, 'Bokin te Tienture', pp 13-14

arrival the Resident Commissioner held a meeting to which Father Quoirier was invited. The Resident Commissioner then had to retract what he had told the people before by announcing that the Catholic faith and school were free on Nikunau. Gradually the Catholics returned to the fold.⁷⁸ Such instances of conflict continued for over half of a century.⁷⁹

The Sisters' efforts to commence a girls' boarding school in Nikunau were unsuccessful at first. The Sisters were untrained and inexperienced and found the girls difficult to discipline. The following story illustrates the logistical difficulties in starting village schools. A parish priest sent two Sisters to visit Tabiteuea to see how the Sisters there were managing with their students who were boarders. The two Sisters were left stranded on Onotoa. The trading ship left without them. When they were finally able to board another trading ship they had to pay to have the ship detour to take them back to Nikunau. They never got to Tabiteuea.⁸⁰

Adapting to the needs of ministry in Kiribati – building the Catholic community

In 1892, Bontemps' apostolic zeal was dampened. He was disappointed at his inability to visit trader Frank Even on Nikunau to administer the last. He had passed away, apparently ruined, because the Protestants made sure no one traded with him. At this point Bontemps realized the futility of trying to do everything on his own.⁸¹ He needed personnel, missionaries who could stay on each of the islands and meet the needs of the growing flock. He was quite aware that good catechism lessons must follow the quick baptism he was granting but that need was left largely unmet across the islands. New converts needed the support and teachings provided by a good Catholic community especially when the Protestant environment was rather hostile. The Protestant church was

⁷⁸ Egan, Sister Helena, A history of the Foundation of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in the Gilberts, p 3

⁷⁹ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*, p 50

⁸⁰ Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*, p 209

⁸¹ Sabatier, p 209

understandably territorial when faced with a new Catholic faith, but some individuals were more hostile than others.

Bontemps subsequently decided to return to Europe to seek help in the form of additional missionaries and a ship, as he recognized that conversion was a complex and ongoing process which needed to be supported and nurtured by the clergy. Whilst Father Bontemps was away in Europe Father Leray was asked to go to Tabiteuea in his place. Nonouti was left in the care of Father Gaillard, a new arrival. On Tabiteuea, Leray covered the length of the island by visiting each village in turn. He responded to challenges converting the population with a renewed determination to trust and lean on the Good Lord through a more fervent prayer life and by adding penance to his missionary work.⁸² As priests and brothers arrived from Europe they undertook the teaching of the people on the islands where they were stationed. The Kiribati mission received its first nuns⁸³ in Nonouti on August 14, 1895. Father Bontemps brought this first group to Kiribati himself and it included priests and brothers. The second group of Sisters arrived in 1899.⁸⁴ The ship, the *Maris Stella*, which was bought from the Marists in Noumea, arrived in the mission in 1894.⁸⁵

The arrival of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart – The Education of Women

With the arrival of the sisters,⁸⁶ the foundation for the special role of women in education was laid. The sisters were posted in groups of two or three to different islands. On their

⁸² Ibid. p 211

⁸³ Nine sisters from across Europe but all stationed in France initially arrived in Kiribati.

⁸⁴ Please see Appendix 1 for a list of the first three groups of arrivals of the Sisters until the last arrival from Europe.

⁸⁵ Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*. pp. 209-310

The ship is called the *Maris Stella* in the Sisters' letters and *Stella Maris* in Sabatier's *Astride the Equator*. It only lasted five years as the mission had no budget for its maintenance and repair.

⁸⁶ Please see Appendix 1 for a list of the first three groups of arrivals of the Sisters until the last arrival from Europe; pp 141-42

assigned island the sisters immediately started schools for girls. The priests and brothers continued teaching the boys with the assistance of helpers chosen from their new flocks. Nonouti was the first headquarters of the Sacred Heart Mission and therefore the very first school for girls was established there in Taboiaki village in 1895. Schools for girls were then established on Tarawa–Teaoraereke in 1896; Tabiteuea in 1897, in Butaritari and Makin in 1897, on Beru in 1899, Nikunau 1899, Abaiang 1900, Marakei 1925, Abemama 1928, Tarawa-Betio 1932 and Maiana 1940.⁸⁷ Sister Julie was in charge of the first school on Nonouti and she taught the elder girls. Sister Isabelle took them for sewing and cooking while Sister Rogatienne took charge of the little ones. The sisters made uniforms for the boys in the schools run by Brother Boniface on Nonouti. In the Sisters' letters to France there were requests to send any clothes they could.⁸⁸ By 1899 the roll of girl boarders in the Sisters' school had reached 40. One of the sisters slept with them in the dormitory as their supervisor day and night. When the Sisters had to visit another village to help prepare children for Holy Communion, a few of the senior girls travelled with them as companions.⁸⁹

In Tarawa, the sisters had three boarders to whom Sister Berchmans (Australian) taught English. For a timetable there were prayers, Mass and breakfast followed by classes. The day students attended sewing classes in the afternoon. One of the Sisters' preoccupations was to have enough food for their boarders. The Sisters received food supplies from Australia such as rice, biscuits, canned meat and other items as gifts. Sometimes the

⁸⁷ Please see Appendix 1 for a list of the first three groups of arrivals of the Sisters until the last arrival from Europe. pp 141-42

⁸⁸ Lynch, 'Bokin te Tienture,' p 1. Major F. G. L. Holland, The Annual Reports on Education for the years 1934-36, Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony; p 1

⁸⁹ Letter from Sr. Julie to Mother Marie Louise and the Sisters, January 1, 1899.

From here to the next chapter most of the information is taken from the letters of the pioneer Sisters from their island stations in Kiribati to the Superior General (Mother Marie Louise) of the Congregation or their religious order and the other Sisters in France. The original copies were in French and are held in the OLSH archives in Tarawa. Ursula Nixon who translated the book, *Astride the Equator*, by Sabatier, has recently begun to translate these letters at the request of Sister Margaret Sullivan, who is presently, in charge of the Archives of the OLSH Province in Kiribati. In those days too the Sister in charge of the Sisters in the mission was called 'Mother', a name that signified the filial relationship between the Sisters and the Leader. Sister Isabelle in Kiribati was called Mother by the Sisters, but not Mother General. There's only one Mother General and she lived in France during that period. Today she lives in Rome.

missionaries ran out of supplies when the boat was late or delayed.⁹⁰ By 1898, the number of school children had reached 60.⁹¹ While records made no mention of what was taught, catechism was sure to be number one on the list, with arithmetic, writing, reading and some English, the rudiments of a Catholic school.

The Contribution of Priests and Brothers to Catholic Education

Father Maria Gressin, the first resident priest of Butaritari, arrived in 1894. He carried a musical instrument with him that attracted both children and adults. When Sisters Baptiste and Ireneé visited Butaritari and Makin in 1897 they assisted by taking some religious classes and making home visits.⁹²

The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Brothers played a major role in the work of the mission in Kiribati. While the priests were the heads of the island parishes the brothers did most of the manual work. They cared for the priests, built churches if there were none, built and established schools in the villages, taught children to read and write, and ensured that children, especially boys, knew their catechism, they visited the sick and baptized those converted on their death beds. Prior to the establishment of St. Michael Training School for catechists the brothers provided great support to the new catechists through supervision, encouragement as well as support in the face of any antagonism from the Protestant community.⁹³

Brother Boniface arrived in Beru in 1897. With the help of the few Catholics he found there, he built classrooms and a church. He started the first Catholic school on Beru and many young boys attended his school. In 1899 the first resident priest, Father Toubanc

⁹⁰ Sister Yves' letter to Mother Marie Louise and the Sisters in Issoudun, October., 30, 1897.

⁹¹ Ibid. 1 January, 1898.

⁹² Lynch, Bokin te Tienture; p 23

⁹³ Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*. p 221

and Sisters Appoline and Ireneé arrived.⁹⁴ The Sisters started a school for girls and due to lack of space they slept in the Sisters' house and had classes in the same room.⁹⁵

Conclusion

Kiribati people regarded the church and school as part and parcel of a whole as they were both conducted by the same personnel. Church support was the only way to get access to school especially when missionaries penalized lapses by excluding new converts. On tiny atolls with small populations public pressure and even non-compliance could turn people into outcasts on their own islands.

Hawaiian and Samoan pastors played a significant role in the spread of Christianity in Kiribati. As Pacific peoples and new converts themselves, they were able to bridge the gap in cultural knowledge between European missionaries and the local people. As this chapter has explained, Pacific pastors were often (although not always!) very hostile towards newcomers and this caused conflicts and divisions between the different religions and their followers.

Missionaries came to evangelise rather than educate. That was their primary task. The ABCFM and the LMS sent out mostly un-ordained missionaries with the specific task to teach the rudiments of religion. The Sacred Heart Mission as the late arrival was compelled to teach to keep the children of their converts from returning to or joining Protestant churches. Even without such competitive motivations, schools were needed to ensure that youth were brought up with knowledge of the catechism and an experience of Catholic life. Although these early missionaries were not all trained teachers what they started in terms of education systems endured. The next chapter focuses on the subsequent development of Catholic education.

⁹⁴ Lynch, 'Bokin te Tienture'. p 19

⁹⁵ Combined letter from Sisters Ireneé and Appoline to Mother Marie Louise and the Sisters in France, Oct., 22, 1899

Chapter 4

The Development of Catholic Education

Catholic Schools: 1900-1950

This chapter examines the development of Catholic Education. Village schools were run by local catechists and were attended by both girls and boys. Island schools were conducted by the Catholic European missionaries. The girls attended the Sisters' schools and the boys the priest or the brother's school. The increasing number of the Catholic population exacerbated the need for a local, and trained personnel to assist as catechist teachers. This led to the establishment of a catechetical institute in Manoku, Abemema.

The chapter also explores the establishment of two girls' schools in Butaritari. The 'English School' reserved primarily for children of mixed race parentage, and the local school, a non-fee paying school for Kiribati girls. Lastly, a look at the education of boys and girls on the islands of Marakei, Abaiang, Tarawa, Maiana, Abemama, Tabiteuea, Nonouti, Beru, and Onotoa, and the colonial education department's reports on teaching and learning on these islands.

What was of paramount importance to the missionaries in those early days was that the Gospel was proclaimed in both word and action, and the gift of faith was nourished by prayers and good works. This chapter describes many very pragmatic teachers, both male and female who used much ingenuity to make the best of the situations of scarcity and hardship in which they found themselves. In Catholic schools, teachers and pupils alike, tried to live and work together and to form a caring and learning community through which to manifest God's love for everyone.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Bishop Paul Mea's Opening Address of the 1985 Catholic Education Seminar, Teoraereke, Tarawa.
p 1

The arrival of the Colonial administration and its significance with regard to education in Kiribati

Declared British Protectorates in 1892, the first sixteen years of the first two Resident Commissioners were spent in setting up British colonial rule in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. The transference of their residency to Banaba in 1908 resulted in a change from an emphasis on setting up colonial administration to a focus on the wealth of phosphate on the island and the potential for income generation.

In 1898 there were five schools under local government control in central Kiribati, but were subsumed into mission schools by the turn of the century.⁹⁷ The Colonial government's policy was to leave the control of village education in the hands of the missions. It encouraged and assisted the missions through the training of village teachers at a Government centre and at Government cost; and to give grants to village schools under the teachers trained by the Education department.⁹⁸ Government emphasized the importance of mass education 'by making education compulsory for children living within reach of a school'.⁹⁹ Literacy of the local populations in their own languages was attributed to the work of the three missions in education, who taught primarily in the Kiribati language.

Government's interest in education was further manifested in an annual financial contribution that began in 1913. Though this was 'modest in the extreme',¹⁰⁰ it indicated a significant shift in government ideology with regards to the importance of education for the general population. With the establishment of a school for the Banaban boys in 1920 an Education Department consisting of only one official was set up to liaise with the missions¹⁰¹ for the running of the Banaban school and the European school, both of which were on located on Banaba.

⁹⁷ Major Holland, *The Annual Report on Education for the Years 1934-36*, p 1

⁹⁸ Ibid. p 2

⁹⁹ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*, p 134

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p 134

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p 134. Major Holland, *The Annual Report of the Director of Education for the year 1938-39*, Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony; p 1

The other two government schools constructed in 1922 and 1924 were King George V School on Tarawa and the Tuvalu School on Vaitupu. Their sole purpose was for the provision of a restricted number of educated personnel for work within the colonial administration and to teach in the village schools. In 1930 Government undertook to train teachers for the missions. These educators went on to teach in what came to be known as ‘improved village schools’ termed as such because they were led by trained staff.

From 1920 until the outbreak of World War Two the administrative side of the Education Department consisted solely of the Director of Education. It was only in 1938 that a clerk in training was provided to support the Director.¹⁰² The Education Department was composed of the Director of Education, the Head Master of the Banaban School, the Head Master of the European School, and the Assistant Masters who were usually local teachers. It was the Director of Education who carried out yearly inspections of government schools, and the ‘improved village schools’. Included in the Director’s list of schools for inspection were the Sisters’ Girls’.

The arrival of the colonial administration in Kiribati led to the training and ‘professionalization’ of teachers. Another significant change in educational policy and practice was the colonial administrations attempts to begin to standardize teaching practice and curriculum across different schools. The primary medium of instruction was also formalized, in attempts to standardize the use of the Kiribati language. Between 1927 and 1936, changes included the spelling of certain words and pronunciation of certain syllables to encourage uniformity in the use of the Kiribati language. This process was instituted by the Colonial education department with the help of representatives from the missions, the Catholic missions and the government sitting together and deciding on which pronunciation to use.¹⁰³ In its efforts to assist in sourcing school materials, the

¹⁰² Major Holland, *The Annual Report of the Director of Education for the year 1938-39*; p 3

¹⁰³ Major Holland, *The Annual Reports on Education for the Years: 1934-36*, p 2

Education department sought the assistance of Miss E. M. Pateman and others of the LMS at Rongorongo.¹⁰⁴

The Canonical Visit: 1902-1903 and Catechetical Training

A canonical visit is an obligatory inspection by major superiors or their delegates of the communities under their care. The Sacred Heart Mission in Kiribati received its first canonical visit in 1902-03. Father Merge visited each priest in his island parish before they all converged for an 18 day meeting (June 15th to July 3rd, 1903) at the mission's headquarters in Butaritari under the supervision of Bishop Leray. At the priests' assembly, Father Cochet who had started a school for male adults at Teraereke, Abaiang, in 1901, gave a report. Lack of funds forced Cochet to admit students only from Abaiang. The synod agreed that all candidates for the Teraereke School were to be trained by the parish priests on the islands before being selected for a further two years at Teraereke. The Bishop's desire to have a centre designed especially for the training of catechists was unanimously approved. The catechist trainees were to be accompanied by their wives and children. The Bishop envisaged candidates from the Teraereke School completing their education at the new centre. The only setback was the mission could not access land. To this end Father Philippe was mandated to negotiate a lease of land with King Paul of Abemama.¹⁰⁵

Butaritari Schools

In the Sacred Heart Mission headquarters on Butaritari, two schools were established on the same premises in 1901. They were conducted in separate classrooms. One for girls of mixed-race parents, generally Kiribati mothers and European or Chinese fathers and was called the English School by the sisters, although it was referred to differently by the

¹⁰⁴ Major Holland, *The Annual Reports on Education for the Years 1934 and 1935*; p 2.
Please see Appendix 3 on School resources, pp 143-144

¹⁰⁵ G. Delbos, 1987. *Nous Mourons de te voir*, Ti mate n kan noriko ! Librairie Artheme Fayard, 1897.
Depot legal 4 trimestre I.S.B.N. 2-86679-003-0 Imprime en Belgique, [English translation by Sister Mary Larkin, FDN.S.C., of the Australian Province]. p 168

locals, who instead labelled it the 'school for half-caste children'.¹⁰⁶ The second school was for girls of Kiribati origin. Not only did the trader parents of some children request education from the sisters but the children of part-European parents were generally able to pay fees. The education of this group of children therefore generated crucial income and subsidized the education of the local children.

While the girls in the English school paid fees those in the second Kiribati only school did not as they did not have the means to do so. They contributed to the running of the school through bringing what food they could from home. Due to the SHM's lack of funds, and despite the fees paid by some students, the person in charge of the sisters, Mother Isabelle, had to think of ways and means of fundraising for both schools. Mother Isabelle was also under pressure from Father Merge to close the schools as they were seen as an unnecessary expense to the mission. Mother Isabelle responded to these pressures through practical means to raise funds by making arrangements with the captains of some trading ships and crew for their washing and mending.¹⁰⁷ Her ingenuity and creativity brought in some funds for the school and ten girls brought from Nonouti to attend the local and non-fee paying part of the school. In 1901 the wooden double-storey,¹⁰⁸ school building, with a zinc roof was completed.¹⁰⁹

In both schools the Sisters taught and supervised the work and the education of the girls both inside and outside of school hours. They helped the small ones to wash and get dressed and the Sisters also made clothes for the girls. Mother Isabelle kept an eye on the farm: chickens, ducks and pigs. She was also the head gardener; the main crops were cabbage, haricot beans, bananas and sometimes tomatoes. At work time the children collected leaves for the garden, and firewood for the kitchen. They also helped out in the

¹⁰⁶ Pers. comm.. with Mereia Rabaua Redfern. Egan, Sister Helena. (1970s?) 'A History of the Gilberts taken from various source': Diaries: Sister Clementine, Sister Oliva Lynch, History of the Australian Province; Letters from Rev. Mother Marie Louise, etc. p 2 [13 A4 loose typed pages stapled together] OLSH Archives, Teaoaraereke, Tarawa.

¹⁰⁷ Dew, Sister Delores and Egan, Sister Helena. 2002, *Valiant Labourers in Our Lord's Vineyard: Kiribati*, Kensington, p. 74 (Congregational publication)

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Sister Arsene to Mother Marie Louise and the Sisters in Issoudun, France, Feb-March, 1902.

¹⁰⁹ Letter from Sister Hermelande to Mother Marie Louise and the Sisters in Issoudun, France, April 12, 1902.

kitchen, in the farmyard and with the laundry. One of the girls had charge of the three pigs and Sister Julie tended the chickens and ducks. The Sisters' letters to Mother Marie Louise in the Mother House in France and the other Sisters give us a detailed insight into daily life and routines at the school.¹¹⁰

Sister Felix Harrington arrived from Australia to take charge of the 'English School' in 1905. Prior to her arrival Sister Julie and Mother Isabelle were the only teachers in the school. Because Sister Felix was expected to teach English she never learnt the Kiribati language. All the Sisters on arrival had to learn the Kiribati language for both evangelization work as well as teaching in schools. Government policy was to educate in the Kiribati language. Resident Commissioners, including Campbell and Grimble, did not believe in colonial students having an academic education. It was only in the 1930s with the arrival of Maude that an academic education was somewhat encouraged.¹¹¹ There were five boarders in the school and about 25 day students. In 1907 there were some local girls in the English school who were able to pay fees; and two students from Jaluit in the Marshall Islands.

On a Saturday in 1927 the inspector from the colonial education department, Major Holland, arrived to inspect both the English and the local schools. During his visit he met with three European Sisters who were teaching 45 girls. There was no set syllabus or formal educational timetable. Equipment consisted of blackboards, slates, writing books, simple readers and Mission printed Geography books. The inspector asked the girls questions on Arithmetic, Geography and heard two read. He found the girls intelligent, and the writing of the students in both schools was excellent. English was mostly the medium of instruction in the English school and the majority of students spoke English

¹¹⁰ Letter from Sister Julie to Mother Marie Louise and the Sisters in Issoudun, France, June 2, 1903.

The Sisters in the mission wrote letters to the Sister in charge back in France sharing their mission with their superior and their Sisters in Europe. As members of the same Order everyone shares in the one mission though this is expressed in the various works carried out by the different members. Not every pioneer Sister was a teacher, so some worked in the kitchen, garden, farm: pigs and chickens, sewing room, supervision of the girls, care of the church and the house. Every sister could do visitation of the people in the villages, the sick and elderly.

¹¹¹ Pers. comm. with Sister Margaret Sullivan, December, 14, 2009

very well. He also inspected the girls' needlework and heard one child playing the piano.¹¹² The inspector seemed very pleased with what he saw.

In the 1930s there were about twelve students in the English school and it remained, reserved for mixed race children. In a tradition dating from the school's foundation, some students from the Marshall Islands, also of mixed racial parentage attended too. In the local school there were fourteen Kiribati girls and about sixty Kiribati day scholar attendants. The part Kiribati and European girls paid fees and had separate dormitories and classrooms and a separate standard of resources and education from the students at the local school. Students at the English school were taught English daily and students at the local school had one lesson of English per week. Among the Kiribati girls attending the local school was Mereia Rabaua Redfern who shared her experiences and recollections of life at the school.¹¹³

Classes began from levels 1 to 8 beginning with eight year-olds in Class 1. The yearly Class 8 graduates from the school should have reached 16, the age when girls and boys were supposed to participate in government communal work. Subjects taught were Arithmetic; English, Religion, Drawing, Printing, Reading, Kiribati language, Needlework, Singing and Cake-making, and memorizing poetry with actions. The Kiribati girls and day students only had one class of English a week. Classes began at 8 am daily and finished at noon. The afternoon was devoted to singing, needlework, and sports. They went to bed at 8 pm at night as there was no generator to provide lighting. The Sisters had Kiribati workers for the *bwabwai* pits, toddy cutting, cleaning up and as fishermen. These support staff members were made exempt from government compulsory communal work for the island at the request of the parish priest. They were put on the same footing as government employees because they were working for the school.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Major F. G. L. Holland, 1927. *Report on SHM schools*. The Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony. Bishop's Archives, Tarawa. p 4

¹¹³ I extend my thanks and appreciation to Mereia Rabaua for contributing her story so eloquently and openly to this thesis.

¹¹⁴ Pers. comm. with Mereia Rabaua Redfern, September 9, 2007. Suva, Fiji.

The Boys' School

Like elsewhere, boys always had the edge over girls in receiving early education. In 1925, Brother Englehart, a German MSC., and trained teacher, came to Butaritari from the Marshall Islands. He opened a school for boys that included children of mixed-race, Marshallese and I-Kiribati. When Major Holland inspected this school in 1927, he observed that the school was well housed in an upstairs room of the European residence for the parish priest. The school roll showed over 30 students. The syllabus revealed a general course of elementary work in Arithmetic, English, Geography, Writing, Reading, Physical Drill and games. As for equipment there was a blackboard, slates and primers and long desks. The inspector was given the school *Prospectus* that told of the boys becoming boarders with fees of £18 per year. The classrooms, dormitory and teacher's accommodation were all in the same building. As a demonstration Brother tested the class in reading, arithmetic and general knowledge. He used English when questioning students. Holland gave the school a B for an Efficiency grade.¹¹⁵

Graduates from the Boys' school were able to obtain jobs in the colonial administration, whereas graduates from the girls' school were not employed. The boys and girls schools were successful and continued to operate until closed down by events of World War 2. When the Sisters returned to Butaritari after the war in 1949, they reopened a primary day school for both boys and girls.¹¹⁶

St. Joseph's College for boys, Tabwiroa

Boys got another opportunity for early education. With the closing of the minor seminary in Buota, the young men returned to their home islands and Brother Gautier, MSC, with his team of young men started levelling the property at Tabwiroa and erecting buildings for a new College for boys. Tabwiroa had many small mounds and holes of all sizes and

¹¹⁵ Major Holland, *Report on Sacred Heart Mission Schools, 1927*. pp 4-5

¹¹⁶ Egan, 'The History of the Gilberts taken from various sources', p 3

depths. There were *bwabwai* and banana pits. Sister Helena Egan arrived in Tabwiroa at the end of 1939 and the College was opened in February, 1940 with Father L. Durand as director and Sister Helena Egan in charge, assisted by a local teacher, Kanikua, from South Tabiteuea. Of the forty boys on the roll, the youngest was 12 years old. These boys had been brought in by the Mission ship, from atolls from Makin to Maiana. Among them were also some ex-seminarians who wished to continue their studies.

Cultural differences emerged with the reconstruction of gender roles. In the Kiribati custom, men do not take instruction or orders from women. However the Director helped greatly in upholding the authority of the Sister in charge and so the school was able to progress with female leaders and teachers at its core. There were some young men who helped in the printing press, and were able to learn some English. There were two classes, one composed of those who had been to the seminary and who knew a little English and Arithmetic; and the second was made up of boys who had never been taught writing or Arithmetic. Classes were held only in the mornings, and in the afternoons the boys helped with the construction work.¹¹⁷ The last of the actual levelling-off and filling-up of the school grounds that took years to complete was rounded up by Sister Alice Tuana in 1983. She *bubuti* the government equipment brought from Tarawa for the construction of the Abaiang airfield and the school was then able to have a beautiful playground area. There was extra space for more teachers' houses closer to the classrooms area. The whole week's work was done free of charge!

The boys looked after their own food and washing. The Sisters helped with their mending. Every Friday, the Abaiang boys went home to collect sufficient food for the following week, while those from the other islands tried to find relatives or friends nearby, otherwise they had to depend on the Mission ship to bring supplies of dried fish and *kamwaimwai*¹¹⁸ from their people. The boys could fish but were discouraged from doing so during the week. They cut toddy for drink. The classrooms were far from being convenient. There were no programmes of work, no teaching aids of any description, no

¹¹⁷ Egan, 'A History of the Gilberts taken from various sources', p 4

¹¹⁸ Local golden syrup from cooked toddy.

charts, and the few text books available were tattered and out of date. At the beginning of 1941 the older boys dropped out and some new boys were admitted. The school was able to function through the war years. The four Japanese soldiers posted to Abaiang often visited the school but did not interfere with it. English continued to be taught when they were not around. As there was a great shortage of food, the timetable was changed so that the boys could go fishing during the school week.¹¹⁹

Marakei

Father Martin Van Hoogstraten arrived on Marakei in January 1900. Brother Martin had already built a church and a small house. Father started a school for the teaching of religion only, one hour for children every day, then the youth and the adults in the afternoon. He was replaced by Father Vocat in 1906. Vocat worked in Marakei for 50 years. Between 1907 and 1908 he and the Catholics on Marakei collected enough funds to build a new church made from timber. Their next construction project was to build a school and a house for the Sisters. When the Sisters arrived in 1925, they started a boarding school for girls in this building, and assisted the catechists in establishing and running schools in each of the seven villages of the island.¹²⁰

The colonial education inspector Mr. Holland reported in 1927 that there were two Sisters, Gregory and Bernadine at the school that had a roll of 46 girl boarders. They held classes for four days a week with lessons beginning at 8.30 am. From 2 pm to 4 pm, teaching included Needlework, Home Crafts, and Weaving. The school had blackboards, slates, writing books, Arithmetic, Geography and English books and picture charts. The students had the use of small desks. In Arithmetic the pupils had made very little progress. Class 3 had started on doing money sums. Reading and drawing were taken from pictures of fish, animals, ships and English rural scenes. The school received a D Efficiency grade.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Egan, 'A History of the Gilberts taken from various sources', p 4

¹²⁰ Lynch, 'Bokin te Tienture', pp. 25-26

¹²¹ Major Holland, *Report on SHM Schools 1927*. p 2

Father Cochet : the boys' school and the printing press

Father 'Ioane' Lebeau at Koinawa had the north of Abaiang as his parish, while in 1903 Father Alexander Cochet at Teraereke was allocated the south of Abaiang. Besides his parish work Father Cochet also ran a boys' school as well as the mission's printing press. He spent 15 years composing and printing books in the Kiribati language ably assisted by Brother Etienne who was known locally as *te Tari Tebano*, and who was fluent in the Kiribati language. The books printed by the mission press were for use in the Catholic schools.¹²² In 1913, Tebano started *te Itoi ni Kiribati* called *te Nutibeba*¹²³ in those days. When he died in Teoraereke, South Tarawa, in 1918 Father Pouvreau took over the printing press.¹²⁴ Bishop Leray's successor, Bach, arrived in the colony in 1928. When he wished to set up a minor seminary for the training of boys for the priesthood the school at Teraereke was transferred to Buota for this purpose. The mission's land lease at Teraereke had expired and also the land was insufficient for the needs of students. At the seminary in Buota the Sisters took charge of the domestic side. After some years the seminary was closed down. The local young men were seen as not yet quite ready for full entry to the ministry.¹²⁵

The growing number of Boys' schools triggered some concern for the welfare of girls. This concern was realized after World War Two.

Girls' school in Tarawa

In South Tarawa, the missionaries received a piece of land and a fish trap in Teoraereke from Matang of Tarawa in 1900, this gift of land was a show of support and constituted much needed resources for the mission. The Sisters' girls' school had 35 students who did academic work in the mornings, handicrafts such as mats and hats in the afternoons.

¹²² The mission press also printed Catechism and hymn books in addition to text books and a Catholic newspaper.

¹²³ Sacred Heart Mission newsletter.

¹²⁴ Lynch, *Bokin te Tienture*; p 48

¹²⁵ Egan, 'A History of the Gilberts compiled from various sources' p. 2

They also fed and clothed the girls in their boarding schools. At the same time they tried to have something for those commuting from home for classes. Hence the frequent requests in the Sisters' letters to those at home for clothes, bits and pieces of materials for their wards. For the girls who had left school or got married the Sisters kept up their interest in them and their families. Each year as the Sisters prepared ten to fifteen girls for their First Communion, dressing them in white dresses and veils just as was done in Europe.

Contributions to the school in the form of gifts from the girls' parents became a regular necessity. These were eggs, some *bwabwai*, and some coconuts given to students when they went out on visitation to their villages. The Sisters found these contributions of great help especially when they were offered in their time of need. Many times the ships from Sydney brought them nothing. Many times what was useful for them was not sent. Supplies from Sydney were also expensive. Girls constantly asked St. Joseph to put fish in their fish trap; and many times he did.¹²⁶

In 1909, the school had the following timetable. They rose at 5.30 am, Mass at 6 am, half an hour for breakfast, followed by cleaning. At 7.30 am the girls worked either in the garden or weaving items for sale. At 9.00 am they had school until midday. There was dinner followed by recreation until 2 pm. Then they worked at their handicrafts. At 5 pm, a Sister would examine their work. The best were awarded with a religious image. Then they had time for themselves until the evening meal at 6 pm. After prayers was recreation and bed at 9 pm. The Sisters tried to train the girls to get used to an organized type of life.

With the help of their girls the Sisters were able to save 1000 francs in two years. So a wooden dormitory was constructed and subsidized by a donation from Sister Hermelande Orhon's family in France. The new dormitory came into use in 1904.¹²⁷ This boarding school for girls continued until 1972 when at a meeting the Kiribati Sisters argued that children, especially at the primary level would be better off with their parents at that stage

¹²⁶ Letter from Sister Berchman to Mother Marie Louise and the Sisters, Issoudun, France, 1901.

¹²⁷ Letter from Sister Hermelande to Mother General and the Sisters in Europe, June 11, 1909.

of their lives. The style and manner of bringing up children differed significantly between the European and Kiribati sisters. There was increasing recognition of this and the Kiribati sisters were also becoming more numerous and influential. The tragic loss at sea in 1971 of two very important Australian Sisters, John Bosco Donnelly who was the Director of Catholic Education in Kiribati, and Rita Mary Skinner who was the head teacher for Catholic Primary schools on Abaiang would have also influenced this decision as their deaths amounted to a significant loss in teaching capacity.

Brother Etienne (Tebano) started a boarding school for boys on the other side of Teoraereke. In the 1950s the students of both schools shared facilities and teachers.¹²⁸ In 1954 an Australian Sister gave only one hour a week of English to the boys. Around this time too Sisters Margaret Sullivan, Consilio Cohesy and Livinus introduced a little English into the new syllabus for Catholic mission village schools. The Sisters went to Betio in 1932, and also began a school for girls.¹²⁹

Maiana

Maiana was first visited by Catholic missionaries in 1900 and had its first resident priest in 1902. The reports on the 1927 inspection of Catholic schools for Maiana were lost at sea at Butaritari. All the inspector could remember was that Father Gaichard and one local were the two teachers. The school building was of native material and rather run down. There were no school rolls, timetable and syllabus. The Inspector learnt from the priest that the children came to school for four weeks followed by a break of two weeks.¹³⁰ The Sisters went to Maiana in 1940. They opened a school and took in boarders. The two Sisters who remained there for the duration of the war were able to continue with their school, but there was neither communication with the rest of the islands nor with the outside world.¹³¹ The Sisters' presence on Maiana was rather short.

¹²⁸ Egan, 'Foundations of the Daughters of Our Lady Sacred Heart in Kiribati' p 7

¹²⁹ Egan, 'A history of the Gilberts taken from various sources' p 3

¹³⁰ Major Holland, *Report on SHM Schools* 1927. p 3

¹³¹ Egan, 'Foundations of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart' p. 5

Despite Maiana's proximity to and accessibility to Tarawa, being a well-populated island, Maiana was and continues to be somewhat overlooked in terms of Catholic education.

Abemama - The emergence of a colonial education 'policy' and the significance of land to expanding education

In 1894, the Protectorate administration made education compulsory for all children. The Sacred Heart Mission was forced to provide teachers as the government did not have Primary schools until after World War Two. The Colonial government also made it impossible for foreigners to buy land from the locals. This was perhaps a move by the Resident Commissioner Campbell to block the construction of a school for Catholic catechists. William Telfer Campbell's term of office lasted until 1908.

On becoming Bishop, Leray had difficulties in getting land big enough for a catechists' training school. Many times the Bishop had to appeal to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific in Fiji for assistance.¹³² Only when the Bishop met King Bauro of Abemama did things look brighter. At first Bauro had land on Kuria for the Bishop only to be hampered by the Central Kiribati District Officer who wanted it for himself. Bauro decided to find land on Abemama. In 1919, the Bishop was able to secure a lease of land big enough on which to build a training institution.¹³³ It was at Manoku, Abemama.

Brother Louis was the first director of the Catechist Training School at Manoku. The aim of the centre was to train young men for work as catechists to help the priests lead the people in the villages in their Christian life as well as teach the children in the village schools throughout the islands where the Catholic faith was beginning to take root. The work of catechists was regarded as especially important in the south where Protestantism was strong and its followers loyal. The new converts needed moral support as well as the help of someone well versed in doctrinal matters. The first trainee teachers, and those for

¹³² Vicariat Apostolique des Isles Gilbert: '*Memorandum du Modus Vivendi coelu avec Les Autorites du Gouvernement Anglais*'. Suva (Fiji), Le 19 Mars, 1904, Finn Bros. Printers 381 Pitt-street, Sydney; pp 2- 4.

¹³³ Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*, p. 301.

many years to come, were married men, usually between the ages of twenty and forty, who with their young families, lived in a village of their own on Manoku station. Each year there were new recruits while those who had completed the three-year teacher-training course returned to become leaders in their islands as catechists as well as teachers in the village schools.

The Sisters came to Abemama in 1928 to work with the wives of the Catechists in training. The Catechists' wives were helped to become more efficient housewives in their domestic duties as well as helpers to the future leaders and teachers. The Sisters also organized a school to educate the children of the catechist trainees. This was the beginning of the island school that later accommodated girl boarders from the distant villages on Abemama.

In 1939, in keeping with colonial government educational regulation that the Missions' teacher training institutions of Rongorongo and St. Michael's should be manned by qualified personnel, Bishop Terrienne requested Sister Delores Dew to commence the teaching of secular subjects and teaching methods at the Teachers' Training School. Teaching at Manoku was disrupted by the arrival of Japanese garrisons on Abemama in 1942. Renovation work followed after the war and by 1947 Manoku was ready to resume the training of catechists. The buildings and staff were ready but teaching materials were hard to come by due to world shortages. Manoku ceased to train teachers in 1972 after an agreement with the colonial government to send trainees to the Kiribati Teachers' College, Bikenibeu, Tarawa.¹³⁴

The Schools on Tabiteuea

The colonial education department inspector in 1927, found three SHM schools on Tabiteuea; at Temanoku, Terakai and Eita village. In the three schools the teachers and pupils were absent and the schools were unkempt.¹³⁵ The schools were visited from the

¹³⁴ Egan, 'Foundations of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Kiribati'. p 7

¹³⁵ Major Holland, *Report on SHM Schools 1927*. p 3

13th-17th January. It was possible to conclude that perhaps the schools on Tabiteuea started late. Their untidy state was due to the long end of year holiday.

Secondary Education for Boys

St. Patrick's College, Tanaeang was the first secondary school for boys. It commenced at Tabiteuea North under Bishop Terrienne's direction in 1939. Father Joseph Branstett was in charge assisted by two local teachers for the education of about forty boys. Three times a week the boys received English lessons from Sister Helena Egan, an Australian. There was only one class for the whole of 1939 and the ages ranged from 12 and over. In 1940 Sister Imelda took charge and stayed at St. Patricks for ten years working with Bishop Terrienne to achieve and maintain a high standard of education for the boys. In 1950 Sister Aileen Crowe arrived at the school. But in 1958 the College was closed due to lack of personnel and the boys were transferred to Tabwiroa, Abaiang.¹³⁶ Abaiang was better positioned for its closeness to the colonial capital, Tarawa.

The Bishop was thinking of the future of the Church in Kiribati in the late 1930s. At the end of their three years of study the Bishop himself interviewed the students individually as to what each wanted to do. After World War Two the biggest attraction was the opportunity of working in the phosphate mining industries in Banaba and Nauru. Usually the Bishop wanted to know for how long the young men would be away and what they wanted to do for the mission on their return. Though these were verbal agreements the young men did not forget *their words* to the Bishop. They became as binding to them as a signed document. In Banaba many worked as clerks, houseboys, and messengers and interpreters for the British Phosphate Commissioners. On their return to the colony many ended up by being trained as catechists to work in Catholic schools. Others found work in the colonial administration. The first local captain of the *Santa Teretia*, Tekee Tabuanaba, was educated at St. Patricks. He did his training on the ship under the direction and supervision of Brother Gautier, who was both captain and the ship's

¹³⁶ Egan, 'Foundations of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Kiribati' p 1

engineer. The first three priests and the first and present Bishop of the Diocese of Tarawa and Nauru were educated at St. Patrick's before moving to Bomana seminary in PNG.¹³⁷

Girls' school in Nonouti

In the Sisters' school for girls in Nonouti two sisters taught the children. The number of children fluctuated between the twenty-two who attended regularly, to over thirty in total. Their ages were from four to fourteen and fifteen. After three hours per day in class the children had time for play. The Sisters did a lot of travelling to the other villages to assist with First Communion of pupils. The priest prepared the children while the Sisters had their clothes ready as well as decorating the church to make the occasion extra special and memorable. The Sisters also made time for visiting the 15 lepers on the island.¹³⁸

The 1927 GEIC report on Catholic schools on Nonouti reported three schools. The school at Matang village was conducted by a catechist and it had 34 pupils, 20 boys and 14 girls. All village schools run by catechists were co-educational, gender segregation began once children went to the schools run by Catholic clergy. The Sisters' school in Nanouti had 22 girls, and the Father's school 17 boys. The report stated that in the three schools there were no school rolls, and no classes. This meant that the pupils in each school were taught together in one class and were not separated in terms of their age or ability; there was no syllabus and no timetable for any of these three schools.

The buildings in the three schools were of local material. Though the boys were present the priest told the inspector in 1927 that his school had not yet started for the year. The inspector visited the schools on January 10th 1927. The government schools at Banaba, Bairiki and Vaitupu were perhaps already underway and so the inspector was expecting Catholic schools to have begun. The inspector observed four lessons in the Sisters' school in Reading, Writing, General Knowledge and Arithmetic. He concluded that the teaching was weak for a European teacher. The sister teacher was being graded on the inspector's

¹³⁷ Pers. comm. with Kum On, March 9, 2008.

¹³⁸ Letter from Sister Leonie to the Sisters in Europe, September, 1910.

expectations for a teacher of European nationality as well as on her capabilities. The inspector observed that at the school in Matang village, the catechist teacher needed some instruction in teaching methods. The efficiency grades for the three schools were D for the priest's school, a D for the Sisters' school and a C for the catechist's school.¹³⁹

Schools on Beru

In 1927, the SHM had two schools on Beru run by catechists. The buildings in both schools were very good, one was made of lime. Both were co-educational but again there were no school rolls, no syllabus and no timetable. In one the teaching was very weak as manifested in the oldest pupils having no idea of numbers and pupils' reading capacity was weak. The inspector concluded that if the teacher was not providing moral training it would be better to have no school at all. The second school had more equipment, a blackboard, slates, a few reading books, and a set of reading picture charts on the walls. The teacher attempted the arithmetic exercises but not the English and the physical exercises. It was obvious the teachers gravely needed assistance or the schools could do with trained teachers.¹⁴⁰

On Beru the Sisters' school had girls who were under 10. The Sisters saw them as the hope of the mission. When the new stone church that the priest and the small Catholic community had been building was completed, the Sisters on Beru realized that they could not afford the Stations of the Cross. They had to wait for the charity of others to help them buy what was necessary for the church. In trying to make dresses for their girl-boarders, the Sister had to make use even of the little scraps of material.¹⁴¹ The Sisters on Beru made the Sisters in Europe Godmothers to some of the little girls in their schools because their girls needed special help.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Major Holland, *Report on SHM Schools 1927*. p 3

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p 6

¹⁴¹ Letter from Sister Appoline to Mother Marie Louise and the Sisters in Europe, June 20, 1903.

¹⁴² Ibid. August, 1903.

Nikunau and Onotoa

The SHM village school of three classes on Onotoa was conducted by a catechist and it was co-educational. The efficiency grade was C.¹⁴³ There was no report on Nikunau School. It seemed Nikunau missed out in the 1927 GEIC inspection of SHM schools.

Nanumea (in Tuvalu)

The last primary school the Sisters established was on Nanumea in Tuvalu in 1966. It was a mixed school for boys and girls. This school gave a further opportunity for Tuvalu students to enrol in Catholic secondary schools in Kiribati. The MSC Brothers took over from the Sisters in 1970 and when winds of political separation between the Gilbert and the Ellice Island groups began to blow,¹⁴⁴ the Catholic mission decided to withdraw and subsequently the colonial government erected a primary school.¹⁴⁵

Conclusion

The teaching of the catechism was the missionaries' mission. To teach the people about God by ensuring they knew the catechism as well as the witness of their own lives. Knowing the Kiribati language was essential to their mission of evangelisation.

Catholic schools like most other pioneering institutions had modest beginnings. They began by teaching the basics of the new religion, and elementary literacy and numeracy. Most of the schools in the villages were of this type. Many of the missionaries were not trained teachers and the absence of school roll, timetable, and, so on indicated that they were struggling to run a school. Yet it was a case of the school reflecting the abilities of the teacher, because some schools were progressing very well, such as the two schools in

¹⁴³ Major Holland, *Report on SHM School 1927*, p. 7

¹⁴⁴ Tuvalu hoped that through independence, services and education for their people would improve. In the union with Kiribati all services for Tuvaluans were located in Kiribati and investment in the infrastructure and education on Tuvalu was negligible.

¹⁴⁵ Pers. comm. with Sister Eileen Kennedy, December 17, 2009.

Butaritari and later those at Tabiteuea and Abaiang. In these schools the Sacred Heart Mission had the personnel and there was progress. The missionaries did not have to teach the children local skills as these were learnt at home. However, they encouraged the maintenance of such skills as part of the cultural life on the islands. What role did the colonial government play in schooling at this time? Did the mission fit in with the colonial plan of education or did the colonial government fit in with the mission educational plan?

Chapter 5

Catholic Education in the Colonial period: 1915-1955

Most Mission Village Schools since their establishment and beyond World War II were co-educational. The Sacred Heart Mission however had girls and boys attend separate schools. The girl schools were conducted by the Sisters and the boys in schools run by a priest or brother. The colonial government had no plan for the education of girls as yet.

Overall the Catholic Mission was not assisted by the British Colonial government. The Missions had already commenced education on the islands before the arrival of the Colonial government. Each Mission had introduced schools as an aid to their evangelization work and conducted separate education systems. As in other colonies the British did not take over the education of the indigenous people completely and had never intended to. In doing this they made clear their belief that the Mission education systems were religious in character and only provided the basics for literacy. Education only became a concern in terms of recruitment for colonial service. The levels of literacy, numeracy and written and spoken English amongst mission school leavers, were not adequate for work within the colonial administration. This was a problem which shaped the subsequent history of education in Kiribati. This chapter examines the effect the new colonial administration had on Mission schools, and Catholic schools.

Governance and the Colonial administration

Charles Swayne was the first Resident Commissioner of the Protectorates of the Gilbert and the Ellice Islands. He spent his two years in this role from 1894 to 1895, trying to establish British rule. He instituted Island Governments which were based on customary laws as perceived by the Protectorate officials and which included customs and laws introduced by the missionaries, particularly those of the LMS in the five most southern

islands of Kiribati. The new structure of island government differed in part from the previous indigenous system where the islands were largely individual and independent, each running its own affairs. In concert with missions establishing churches the new system involved following a uniform system of government under a foreign power.

The new island government consisted of a magistrate, a chief of *kaubure* and *kaubure*.¹⁴⁶ This new body chose a small number of policemen¹⁴⁷ and a scribe or secretary who administered the newly established island fund which was created from government introduced taxes and fines¹⁴⁸ and used for running the Protectorates.

Although chiefs in central and northern Kiribati and Tuvalu and elders in the *mwaneaba* government of the southern Kiribati were engaged as leaders in the new Island Governments supervised by a small number of white officials, local politics and traditional methods of election were often disregarded. The magistrate, who was the head of local government, was responsible and accountable to the colonial government instead of to the people. The people were governed by laws and norms from another cultural and conceptual world. Elected Island Government officials, which held ‘full police and magisterial powers’, were nevertheless supervised by white officials.¹⁴⁹

Another innovation of the colonial administration was to equip each island with a clinic and two prisons, one for men and one for women.¹⁵⁰ When chiefs became troublesome to the administration they were dealt with within this legal system. For example, Swayne deported Tatum the high chief of Marakei in 1893 to Fiji where he lived in exile for two years as punishment for a historically unrecorded crime.¹⁵¹ During the time of William Telfer Campbell (1896-1908) successor to Swayne, chiefs who were seen to be exploiting their new positions for their own benefit were transferred to the colonial headquarters in

¹⁴⁶ Meaning councillor.

¹⁴⁷ Usually less than four police in islands with populations below one thousand people.

¹⁴⁸ E.C. Eliot, 1915. *A Model Protectorate: Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, Central Pacific*, [London]. p 3. Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*. p 77

¹⁴⁹ They were later called District Officers.

¹⁵⁰ Eliot, *A Model Protectorate*. p 2

¹⁵¹ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*; p 77

Tarawa for imprisonment. In southern Kiribati where the *mwaneaba* system¹⁵² of government was strong the elders of this system were co-opted.¹⁵³

William Telfer Campbell, Swayne's successor was unimpressed with the performance of the new Island Government officials. He judged them to be inefficient and this was likely to be the case as they were learning to administer a totally new and foreign concept of ruling and governance. Campbell responded by having members of the island councils re-elected. He also abolished the powers of the high chiefs of Butaritari and Abemama in 1907¹⁵⁴ before he left the colony in the following year. He decided to have the island governments supervised by men who would carry out his instructions of law and order. *Kaubures* supervised communal work of establishing new villages, and the upkeep of cleanliness on the islands.¹⁵⁵ Changes in island governments were subjected to his approval and to ensure absolute obedience to him and his instructions he established a Protectorate police force of Fijians based in Tarawa. Campbell believed that as foreigners, Fijian police were better able to carry out instructions without question. Kiribati and Tuvaluan police were finally included in 1917¹⁵⁶ long after he had left the colony.

After Campbell left in 1908 the colonial headquarters were moved to Banaba and remained there until after the Second World War. The focus in the move to Banaba was on the valuable and lucrative phosphate.¹⁵⁷ The Protectorate administration could not establish any schools from their location in Banaba as they were too far removed from the people of Kiribati and Tuvalu. At the same time it was suffering from a lack of administrative personnel generally and education was not a primary concern. It was cheaper for the government to leave education in the hands of the missions. Therefore it

¹⁵² The heads of each *kaainga* (Elders) held council in the *mwaneaba* to deliberate on matters pertaining to the island as a whole and its people. Decisions were reached by consensus. Because elders were numerous in number Campbell had their number reduced to a number he thought manageable.

¹⁵³ See Taiaiake, A, 1999 *Peace Power and Righteousness An Indigenous Manifesto*, Oxford University Press. p. 73 for definition of co-optation.

¹⁵⁴ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*. p 84

¹⁵⁵ Eliot, *A Model Protectorate*; p 5

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. pp.3-4. Maude and Doran Jr. *The Precedence of Tarawa Atoll*. p 281

¹⁵⁷ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*, p 100

was initially convenient and cost effective for the colonial administration to give the Missions free rein to continue with the work they had started in the field of education.

However, the processes of establishing colonial rule were not new to Britain. In Africa, Asia and other parts of the Pacific, Britain did not impose a colonial education policy, and what policy there was consisted of allowing voluntary organizations to carry the responsibilities of education within its colonies. In many places as in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, the missionaries were already in the place before Britain's arrival as a colonizing power.

The colonial government's first financial contribution to education was manifested in the provision of the sum of £275 as grants-in-aid to Missions for their schools and printing presses. Grants-in-aid were an allocated fund given by the Government to the missions for their work in education. These were awarded in 1913 and 1915. In 1916, the two island groups were amalgamated to form the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony (GEIC). In 1917, the amount given through 'grants-in-aid' was increased to £500¹⁵⁸ and remained thus until 1948. The amount was minimal; perhaps it was only a token gesture of appreciation for the Missions' work in education. Government expenditures on Education from 1944-54 can be viewed in Appendix 2.¹⁵⁹

Language, Education and Social Control – The demands of the Colonial administration

The Kiribati language was the medium of education in the majority of Mission Village schools. English was taught as a subject in the LMS Pastors' Training School at Rongorongo, Beru; and at its intermediate schools on Arorae, Nonouti and Maiana that prepared boys for admission to Rongorongo. The Sacred Heart Mission's schools at Butaritari, one for Boys and for the other for Girls had English as their language of

¹⁵⁸ Major Holland, *The Annual Report on Education for the Years 1934-36*; p 2. Major Holland, *The Annual Reports of the Director of Education for the years: 1937-38 and 1938-39*, p 2

¹⁵⁹ Please, see Appendix 2, p 142

instruction. The Colonial government encouraged the local languages as the medium of instruction for its own reasons. Education in English was reserved for the few who would be employed in the Colonial administration. Nevertheless, the government recognized that “English was the most popular of all subjects on account of sentiment as the language of Government and of supposed economic advantage”.¹⁶⁰

The establishment of four government schools in the 1920s, with English as the medium of instruction was a clear indication of the use of education as a means of underpinning the colonial hierarchy and of establishing social control. A finite number of schools were established based upon the needs of the colonial government rather than the needs of the Kiribati population, which unfortunately remained unarticulated.

The regular reports by officials of the Colonial Education Department sounded like ‘complaints’ highlighting the low standards of attainment in the village schools, particularly in the English language as education took place in the vernacular. Due to this perceived low standard the colonial government’s attitude towards the work of the Missions schools was one of condemnation. The colonial administration could not employ mission school graduates in the government due to the low standard of English, literacy and numeracy. As the colonial administration was the only organization offering paid employment, education was therefore not a guaranteed pathway to an income. The missions’ main focus was ensuring that converts were able to read the Bible, vernacular and numerical literacy standards, religious instructions and the education of girls.

Because the Missions were educating the girls and women, the Sacred Heart Mission in particular encouraged the maintenance of handicrafts besides hygiene and home-care. English was taught as a subject in some Mission schools if there were European missionaries available to teach it. It was possible some girls picked up some French words or learnt some French songs from the French missionaries but they never had to learn French. Proficiency in the English language was essential to providing personnel necessary for establishing the colonial civil service. Since colonies were to finance

¹⁶⁰ Major Holland, *Annual Report on Education for the Years 1935* p 3 and 1936 p 4

themselves, it was the expressed, growing, and yet finite needs of the civil service that led the government to establish four schools.

The Government's preoccupation with educational standards was evident in the Annual Education Report 1937-1938. The report revealed that of the 35 white missionaries engaged in Mission schools in Kiribati, only four had teaching qualifications. Out of the 243 local teachers only 23 had had some teacher training.¹⁶¹ These 23 were trained in the government teacher training scheme for mission teachers offered at King George V School from 1930-1934. The Government apparently did not have much confidence in the teacher training in Rongorongo, Beru and at St. Michael's on the island of Abemama. They thought the curriculum too religious and while they produced people with integrity they were not sufficiently academic or scholarly.

The establishment of Government Schools – 1920s

The first Government school in Kiribati was established on Banaba in 1920 for Banaban boys only. The school and education of the Banaban boys were financed from the Banaban communal fund derived from phosphate royalties.¹⁶² Major Holland of the colonial education department was the founder of the school.¹⁶³ A small number of non-Banaban boys were admitted later. The same year also saw the foundation of the Colonial Education Department that comprised of one person whose role was to liaise between the Government and the Mission bodies.¹⁶⁴

In 1922, Major Holland was also delegated to start a boarding school for 60 Kiribati boys on Bairiki, South Tarawa. It was named King George V School (KGV) in 1925. KGV School drew its candidates from the Mission village schools. It aimed at training a limited

¹⁶¹ Major Holland, *The Annual Report of the Director of Education for the year 1937-38*. p 5

¹⁶² Major Holland, *Annual Report on Education for the years 1934-36*; p 1. *The Annual Reports of the Director of Education for the years 1937-38, 1938-39*. p 1

¹⁶³ Major Holland, *The Annual Report on Education for the Year, 1934*. p 1

¹⁶⁴ Major Holland, *The Annual Report of Education for the years 1934-36*. p 1. Major Holland, *The Annual Reports of the Director of Education for the years 1937-38 and 1938-39*; p 1

number of young men for the required lower posts in the civil service as clerks and interpreters, as well as to teach in the village schools.¹⁶⁵

The third government school resembled KGV and it was built on Vaitupu in Tuvalu for the Tuvaluan children in 1924. The initiative for the creation of this school came from the Tuvaluans themselves. Government was not going to build a school in Tuvalu and there was some reluctance on the part of the Tuvaluans to send their children to Kiribati for education. The Tuvaluans supplied funds in terms of free labour and material for the construction of the school, and yet more funds as students' fees, as well as paying the salary of the headmaster, Mr. Kennedy, for the first three years.¹⁶⁶ The offer was too good for the colonial government to turn down. For its part, government offered to take over the school after three years. Government failed to fulfill this commitment. This was due to the fact that KGV was sufficient to meet the manpower needs of the colonial administration.

Changing Philosophies of Education

The educational debates of 1922 and 1926 'on the nature and purpose'¹⁶⁷ of the three government schools occurred between the English headmasters, F. G. L. Holland of KGV and D. G. Kennedy of the Tuvalu School and Resident Commissioners McClure in the first instance, and between the same two headmasters and Resident Commissioner, Arthur Grimble, in the second. The headmasters preferred an academic oriented curriculum with "English as the medium of instruction".¹⁶⁸ They wanted to enhance the education of their students to teach in the village schools and thereby raise standards.

¹⁶⁵ Major Holland, *The Annual Reports of the Director of Education for the years 1937-38*; p 2; and 1938-39. p 1

¹⁶⁶ Major Holland, *Annual Reports on Education for the years 1934-1936*. p 2. Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*, p 134. N. P. Teo, 'Colonial Rule', in *Tuvalu, a History* (edit) H. Laracy, Institute of Pacific Studies and Extension Services, University of the South Pacific and the Ministry of Social Services, Government of Tuvalu. pp. 135- 136.

¹⁶⁷ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*, p 134

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p 134

English would widen and increase indigenous access of communication and understanding of the world.

This approach to education was unacceptable to the Resident Commissioner, McClure, who saw such principles as militating against those “of good government of a native race”.¹⁶⁹ His attitude was that the native people must be kept in their place and involved recognition of the idea that education is power. McClure’s attitude was that to educate in English was futile and unnecessary because it would only be awakening and nurturing in youth aspiration and dreams that could never be realized.¹⁷⁰ The validating rationale was the chronic lack of prospect of development in the colony and the inherent absence of job opportunities.

This resulted in a government policy that vanished with World War Two. This policy was concerned mainly with the maintenance of its four schools. The two schools on Banaba were given ‘a general education’ while the Kiribati and Tuvalu schools had ‘vocational and cultural objectives’¹⁷¹ such as a primary education which included religion, hygiene, agriculture and handicrafts to prepare students for government and mission employment. Mission education was brought under its grant-in-aid system that aimed at improving teacher training for village schools for better standards!¹⁷²

McClure, the Resident Commissioner, was hugely influential and important in shaping colonial policies. In the absence of common educational policies in its colonies, Britain had given the ‘man on the spot’ much power as well as “much elasticity”¹⁷³ with which to implement guidelines from the London Colonial Office.

¹⁶⁹ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*, p 134

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p 135. Major Holland, *Annual Reports on Education for the years 1934-36*. p 2

¹⁷¹ Major Holland, *Annual Report on Education for the year 1934* p 2; 1935 pp 2-3

¹⁷² Major Holland, *The Annual Reports of the Director of Education for the years 1937-38 and 1938-39* p 2

¹⁷³ C. Whitehead, 1981, ‘Education in British Colonial Dependencies, 1919-39: a re-appraisal’, *Comparative Education*, Volume 17 No. 1 March, 1981. p 72

The first KGV graduates of 1926 filled up the required vacant posts in the colonial administration. The above education issue that occurred during McClure's term of office as Resident Commissioner resurfaced. Arthur Grimble was the Resident Commissioner (1926-32). Like his predecessor, Grimble could only see the continual outflow of graduates from the government schools as detrimental to the local populations on account of lack of employment opportunities.¹⁷⁴

Consequently, the Banaban School was restored to being a school again in 1934. The Banaban School had the backing of phosphate mines in terms of funds and employment, but the Tuvalu School had its headmaster removed and appointed as Administrative Officer and Lands Commissioner for Tuvalu. In 1931 the school reverted to teaching the Village Schools' syllabus, which was education for village life such as provided by the missions.¹⁷⁵ The GEIC colonial administration's agreement to take over full control of the Tuvalu was overlooked.

Arthur Grimble, the Resident Commissioner, had been in the islands from 1914-1932 and therefore lacked exposure to what was happening to colonies in other parts of the world. He was a paternalistic figure whose professed tendency was to keep the indigenous people, in this case I-Kiribati and Tuvaluans in their 'original' state free from outside influence.¹⁷⁶ Grimble's attitude can be seen as racist and simplistic, underpinned by the idea that the Kiribati culture is fixed and unchanging; and that the Kiribati people were living in their 'original' state, and should be preserved. He oversimplified and underestimated the dynamic history of Pacific peoples before European contact. Grimble by-passed or perhaps chose to forget the fact that the Kiribati and Tuvaluans of his time

¹⁷⁴ Major Holland, *Annual Reports on Education for the Years, 1934-36*. p 2. Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*; p 135

¹⁷⁵ Major Holland, *Annual Report on Education for the year 1934-36* p 2. Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*, p 136

¹⁷⁶ Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*, p 137

were eventually descendants of a number of waves of migrants from South-east Asia.¹⁷⁷ Their early ancestors had travelled the vast and often treacherous highways of the Pacific Ocean in their canoes using traditional knowledge and methods of navigation with the ocean currents, birds, stars and clouds as guides! Without notions of national boundaries their inter island movement and migration facilitated wide kin networks and relationships throughout the Pacific. All these predated European contact. Pacific history did not begin with the coming of Europeans but their superior and Eurocentric ideas perpetrated this myth of preserving a supposedly unchanging pattern of living. Grimble idealized the Kiribati people and culture to the point that he was reluctant to support any change.

The fourth government school was for the children of the British Phosphate Commissioners' personnel on Banaba in 1929. This was the only government co-educational school and it was for European children. This school followed a syllabus similar to that taught in primary schools in western countries.¹⁷⁸

The 1930s - Colonial government's attempts at teacher training

The Government's continued concern with alleged low standards in Mission village schools, led to a teacher training programme formulated in 1927 and implemented in 1930. This was a scheme of co-operation between Government and Missions for the training of ten teachers per year (five from each Mission, LMS and SHM) from 1930-34 at the Government King George V School. The KGV School roll was reduced by almost half in order to give the teacher trainees room in its premises.¹⁷⁹ This cost the government £30 a year per teacher trainee.

¹⁷⁷ *Gilbert Islands District: Combined Annual Report for the Years 1943 and 1944.* pp 2-3

¹⁷⁸ Major Holland, *The Annual Report of the Director of Education for the Year 1938-39.* p 10

¹⁷⁹ Major Holland, *Annual Reports on Education for the Years 1934, 1935 and 1936.* p 1

In the last year of the scheme, the Sacred Heart Mission withdrew by not sending its five teachers. This Mission was dissatisfied with the newly trained teachers' reluctance to abide by Missions' school regulations regarding discipline.¹⁸⁰ The withdrawal of this Mission, coupled with a lack of funds, meant the scheme was discontinued at the end of 1934 bringing the number of trained teachers to 35 instead of the 40 originally envisioned. The village schools to which the teachers were assigned were upgraded and renamed 'improved village schools' and granted additional funds.¹⁸¹

The same scheme was revised in 1938. Government requested that the Missions train their pastors and catechists in a way that enabled them to teach in the village schools and recommended that the length of training should increase from one to three years. The missions were to engage a qualified teacher trainer in their teacher training institutions. Government aimed to have trained teachers for a 100 village schools under each Mission. Increase of salaries and better equipment were incentives for trained teachers. Inspection was the joint responsibility of the Education Department and the Missions.¹⁸² On account of the War this policy was implemented in 1948 by engaging qualified teacher trainers.¹⁸³

What were the results of these early efforts?

The work of the Officials in the Colonial Education Department bore fruit quite early. Nine Medical Practitioners graduated from the Central Medical School in Suva from 1928-35 had found employment in the Colony.¹⁸⁴ In 1934 three KGV graduates were

¹⁸⁰ Major Holland, *Annual Report on Education for the Year 1934*. pp 2 and 4. Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire*. p 135

¹⁸¹ Major Holland, *Annual Report on Education for the Year 1936*. p 6

¹⁸² Major Holland, *The Annual Report of the Director of Education for the Year, 1938-39*. p 2

¹⁸³ Major Holland, *Annual Report on Education for the Year 1935*. p 5

¹⁸⁴ Major Holland, *Annual Report on Education for the Year 1934*. p 5

working in Local governments¹⁸⁵ and one in the District administration sector. In 1935 40 other ex-KGV were holding posts in other government departments and another 30 were engaged in commercial ventures.¹⁸⁶

Unequal resources within government and mission schools

From their establishment until World War Two, the buildings for the Banaban School and the School for European children were constructed from timber. The two government boarding schools and Mission village schools had building made of local material. The Missions' central schools had a mixture of buildings, some made of local and imported materials. Equipment in schools ranged from adequate to poor. In the Government schools and the Mission boarding schools, furniture, materials and pupils' books were satisfactory. There were blackboards, desks, books and writing materials, though some books had been torn or were out of date and needed replacement.

Generally there was a better standard of equipment and resources in government schools. There was an obvious demand for more and better text books in some mission boarding schools. In the village schools there was furniture but only for the use of the teachers. The pupils sat on mats on the floor to do their schoolwork. The Government was aware that the Missions were unable to improve the situation in terms of resources.¹⁸⁷ Parents had not had a role in the running or formation of the schools and thus were not aware of what schools considered to be their *obligation*.

¹⁸⁵ Major Holland, *Annual Report on Education for the Year 1934*. p 5

¹⁸⁶ Major Holland, *Annual Report on Education for the Year 1935*. p 6

¹⁸⁷ Major Holland, *Annual Reports on Education for the Years 1934-1936*; p 5. Major Holland, *The Annual Report of the Director of Education for the year 1938-39*. p 7

Why did the British administration want to improve educational standards?

It was possible that colonial officials in the Education Department were genuine in their desire to do more for education in the Colony. However, the sheer lack of capital as well as the absence of educational policies handed down from London to the hierarchy of Colonial Administrators, who were also subject to frequent change at the end of their terms of office were major obstacles to educational development.¹⁸⁸ At the same time parents had not had a role in the running or formation of the schools and thus the schools missed out on a vital source of a potentially lucrative physical and moral support. Parents had not attended school themselves and therefore had no ideas of, or expectations of what school was or should be, or what their relationship to it should be like. Their obligation in regard to the education of their children needed to be taught and explained to them. The use of money was extremely limited and parents could only access money through subsistence copra production and working as phosphate labourers on Banaba and Nauru. Government was dictating and imposing its own expectations on the locals when it was really its responsibility to negotiate with them. Working in cross-cultural situations required much dialogue and explanation. Instead the colonizers introduced their own systems and expected the colonized to adapt and understand.

Finance

From the time of their establishment Mission village schools were fee-free. The Colonial government also did not charge school fees,¹⁸⁹ so there was no revenue from education. Fees in secondary schools were introduced in secondary schools after World War Two in the mid 1950's. There was a remarkable increase in the colonial government's grants to education after World War Two during the financial years, 1944-1954.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Whitehead, 'Education in British Colonial Dependencies, 1919-39: a re-appraisal'. p 74

¹⁸⁹ Major Holland, *Annual Reports on Education for the years 1934 and 1935*; p 3

¹⁹⁰ Please, see Appendix 2, p 143, for a breakdown of the GEIC colonial education budget and allocations.

The 1950 grants-in-aid to Missions schools gave each pupil an average of 4s. 5d. while the average amount for each student in government schools was £10 6s. 1d.¹⁹¹ The total expenditure for the year 1954 depicted “5.64% of the Colony’s estimated expenditure for that year, and an increase of 0.69% over that of 1953.”¹⁹²

Conclusion

Raising standards was an on-going issue between the colonial administration and the mission administration. The differing educational motivations of the Missions and the Colonial government could be seen in their educational efforts. Despite everything and the poverty of the atolls, the Missions persevered with their education and what secular education they could offer. They struggled with limited resources to educate the locals while the colonial government as the ruling power was unprepared and perhaps refused to do anything beyond what the colony was prepared to afford.

The colonial government could have done significantly more to support education in the GEIC for all children. Instead its agenda was selfish and self serving, with access to education and curriculum intentionally limited to meet the needs of the administration. The curriculum offered in Island Schools suffered through lack of financial support and resources of all kinds. This led to a two-tier education system which continues to the present day between government and church secondary schools. The gap has greatly diminished since the turn of this millennium. Colonial educators chose to interpret government directives from Britain in a way which would not support the total population of school aged children in the GEIC. Colonies were expected to fund themselves and resources were limited. It was very difficult, perhaps impossible to institute an equitable educational system for all children. This became one of the founding philosophies of Taborio School when it was established in 1955. The church would always do what it could to help people, in this case in the matter of education.

¹⁹¹ Education Department, *Report on Education for the year 1950*. p 4

¹⁹² Education Department, *Report for the year 1954*. p 5

Chapter 6

The impact of World War Two on Education in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony

Introduction

This chapter examines the impact of World War Two in the colony and the effect on educational policies. It considers how individual schools coped with the advent of war and how education changed in response to the changes in the physical and political environment and scarcity of resources. The account of the impact of war on education in the GEIC, examines the British Phosphate Commissioners' device for technical and vocational training as an education strategy for meeting post war skill shortages. It will give an account of the establishment of government primary schools and government Island Council primary schools distinct from the Mission village schools. This formed the beginnings of a two-tier education system. For the first time the colonial government included girls in its post-war primary schools.

The impact of World War Two and its effects of the war in the colony:

1941-45

Prior to World War Two the only wireless station was on Betio, the colonial government headquarters and the main shipping port for overseas vessels. The outer islands relied on news brought by irregular visiting ships. In November, 1941, the colonial administrator on Tarawa issued an order that all Europeans, including missionaries were to be evacuated. Bishop Terrienne gave his priest and brother confrères freedom to choose for themselves whether to leave or not, and he expressed a preference that the Sisters leave first. He stayed behind.

The 31 Sisters: French, Irish and Australian, in Kiribati at the time were scattered over the group in their stations. Picking them up took a long time as the Sisters had to pack and put away everything. It was not easy for them to say goodbye to the people, especially the girls. The Bishop brought to Betio the Sisters from the South and those from the north arrived soon after that. The *Santa Teretia* was at Maiana on its way to Tarawa from picking up the last of the Sisters from Abaiang, Abemama and Maiana when the Captain, Father Klipfel, MSC., was told by the New Zealand wireless operator on Maiana that he had to sail straight for Suva. The wireless operator was one of the 24 New Zealand wireless operators and coast watchers recruited by the GEIC government for the islands. The Japanese had arrived on Betio. The Maiana Sisters remained on Maiana, the rest were put ashore at Abemama and Father sailed the *Santa Teretia* to Fiji for safety.¹⁹³

None of the priests made a move to leave while the Sisters were not able to get away. Except for the priest and brother who died in hospital on Banaba, and the two priests who were killed in Mille in the Marshalls the Catholic missionaries were fortunate as they were not molested by the Japanese. A Japanese warship collected all Europeans who had chosen to stay behind from around the islands including the New Zealand wireless operators and coast-watchers and brought them to Betio. With the exception of the seven wireless operators and coast-watchers who were taken to Japan the remaining 23 including Reverend A. L. Sadd of the LMS were all killed in Betio on 15 October, 1942.¹⁹⁴

The war brought an end to KGV on Tarawa, the Banaban School, and the two SHM schools for multi-ethnic girls and boys of mixed parents on Butaritari, as these islands including Abemama, were occupied by Japanese troops. KGV students joined the GEIC Labour Corps.¹⁹⁵ The Tuvalu school on Vaitupu continued undisturbed by the war. While

¹⁹³ Egan, *A History of the Gilberts taken from various sources*, p. 3.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 3. Gilbert Islands District: Combined Annual Report for the years 1943 and 1944. p. 4

¹⁹⁵ Pers. comm. with Captain Teitia Redfern, 15 September, 1990

¹⁹⁶ Egan, 'A History of the Gilberts from various sources' p. 3

these four islands experienced some scary events, the rest of the islands were left untouched. Communication with their island neighbours or the outside world came to a standstill. Schools continued, but did so without the yearly visits of the European missionaries and trading ships for cargo.¹⁹⁶ The Kiribati and Tuvaluans living on Tarawa were moved to the villages of Eita and Buariki during the Japanese occupation of South Tarawa and later to north Tarawa where they remained until after the 'Battle of Tarawa' whence they were asked to help clean up Betio. The Japanese however called on a certain number of young men from each North Tarawa village to assist in the construction of fortifications on Betio.¹⁹⁷

In the unfortunate and devastating Battle of Tarawa, from 20-22 November, 1943, Betio had but a few coconut trees left standing. The Americans totally defeated the Japanese with heavy losses to both sides and restored peace in the GEIC. In the construction and reorganisation of the colony after the war the Bishop anticipated that Tarawa would be the Colony's headquarters and moved his residence from Tabiteuea to North Tarawa. This assumption was made due to the island's more central location and good anchorage at Betio. The Colonial hospital was in the village of Abaokoro, 3 km south of Taborio.

Reconstruction and education after the war

When education resumed in 1946 a total of 236 schools reopened in the Colony. Of these there were 217 Mission Village schools, 14 Mission schools which included pastor and catechist training institutes, intermediate schools between the village schools, the training schools in Rongorongo and St. Michael's, the Sisters' Girls' schools, 4 Government schools and one European school. In the intermediate schools, boys were prepared for the mission training centres. The total attendance of pupils in the Colony was 8,192; of these 6,712 were in Kiribati schools, 1,480 in Tuvaluan schools and 59 boys studying in Fiji.

¹⁹⁷ Pers. comm. with Karaiti, February, 14, 15, 1990. He was one of the young men engaged for work by the Japanese. He was about 16 at the time.

For the first time there appeared in the education report 133 pupils in the Phoenix Islands as a result of the resettlement scheme of the 1938-40.¹⁹⁸ Compared to the figures in the 1937-38 Education Report where the total number of students enrolled in schools was 6,790, the increase was 1,402 in eight years.

The LMS was responsible for ninety-seven village schools that catered for 1,375 boys and 1,385 girls. Of its 97 schools 16 were improved village schools with 522 boys and 460 girls enrolled. The SHM had 100 village schools for 927 boys and 916 girls in attendance. Its seven improved village schools had rolls of 181 boys and 78 girls. A group school or an island school of 29 boys on Vaitupu in Tuvalu prepared boys for Malua Training Institute in Samoa.¹⁹⁹ Its nine village schools had 387 boys and 414 girls in attendance.²⁰⁰ The school population had increased by almost 2,000 pupils. The responsibility of education in Village schools was still in the hands of the Missions, but there was a growing desire amongst the people for village schools to be placed more direct Government control.

In order to enable the colony to recuperate after the war the education of a number of colony boys was made possible under a Colonial Development and Welfare Grant in Fiji. The GEIC Education for the year 1950 states that:

The scheme to educate boys in Fiji after the war has been hampered by their educational standards on admission to schools in Fiji. This scheme was an interim measure pending the reorganization of the Colony's educational system to provide secondary, technical and university education for selected students of ability who would then be able to staff schools and the administration. Unfortunately there was only a limited number in this category, and it was necessary to return the remainder to the Colony during or after intermediate schooling without embarking

¹⁹⁸ Hard, *Report on Education for the year 1946*. p 3

¹⁹⁹ This LMS School in Tuvalu was known as Motufoua. It came into existence in 1905 and functioned separately from the Government school on Vaitupu. When the government school closed down in 1953 and the Tuvalu students transferred to KGV Motufoua continued its operation up to separation of Tuvalu from Kiribati in 1975. In a spirit of cooperation the new government of Tuvalu and the Church of Tuvalu agreed to make Motufoua a government secondary school for the country's students.

²⁰⁰ Holland, *Report of the Director of Education for the year 1937-38*. p 5

*them upon the full course for which it had been hoped they would been suitable.*²⁰¹

KGV was relocated to Abemama in one of the American troops' abandoned labour corps camps. The expectation was that Abemama would be the headquarters of the Colony, but the lot fell on Tarawa owing to its good anchorage at Betio. From 1945-1948 with the assistance of the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, a total of 93 GEIC boys were sent to continue their primary education at boarding schools in Fiji under a Colonial Development and Welfare Grant.²⁰² This temporary measure was to allow the colony to get its education system re-organised and restarted. After primary school, colony students in Fiji continued to Queen Victoria School and then to the Central Medical School and the Teachers' Training College at Nasinu. Three continued to New Zealand for secondary education. Of these three, one returned to take up teaching while the other two entered government service.²⁰³ The scheme was discontinued in 1948. Many students did not do well with their studies and were therefore returned home.²⁰⁴

Grants in aid to the Missions were still being paid on the basis of the 1930 scheme of Government teacher training and grants to "improved village schools". The new grants scheme drawn up in 1939 and agreed to by the Missions had not yet been put into operation due to lack of funds and the war. With the relocation of the Banabans on Rabi in Fiji, the colony had lost the children of Banaba islanders to the education system of Fiji, and with it the phosphate generated revenue derived from the education of their children. However, the colony also received some revenue from BPC for the education of the children of the Colony phosphate labourers. BPC was left on Banaba and the European school became its sole responsibility.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Education Department, Report on Education for the year 1950; p 4

²⁰² Ibid. p 2

²⁰³ Ibid. p 5 and 6

²⁰⁴ Ibid. pp 4

²⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 1

The British Phosphate Commissioners' Apprenticeship Plan: Technical and Vocational Education

In 1946, the British Phosphate Commissioners (BPC) proposed a plan for the training and employment of Colony students in fitting, plumbing, carpentry and other departments at Banaba.²⁰⁶ This apprenticeship plan was devised to fulfill a number of purposes. The Japanese occupation of Banaba from 1941 to 1945 had caused a substantial amount of damage to infrastructure in the place. The BPC had left the island when the war broke out. On their return in 1945 they found many people in the local population who had supported the mining industry had either been killed or transported to other islands. There was a demand not only for mining workers but also skilled trades-people that needed to be rapidly filled. There was also a general need across the colonial administration for skilled people.

The BPC's apprenticeship plan was undertaken with government's assistance in the selection of candidates as well as the provision of transport to and from their home islands.²⁰⁷ In 1947, of the twenty-four young men recruited, twelve were from the two government boarding schools while the rest came from Mission schools. The duration of their apprenticeship training was five years. In 1949, a further twenty-eight were recruited and another twenty-six in 1950 bringing the total number to seventy-eight. Of these, fifty-two were former students of government schools while the remaining twenty-six were from mission intermediate schools (Classes 7-8).²⁰⁸

Courses were provided to train plumbers, welders, fitters, carpenters, blacksmiths, painters, concreters, boiler makers, platelayers, clerks and storekeepers in order to meet the workforce needs of the colonial administration. Inspection by the Director of

²⁰⁶ Hard, *Report on Education for the year 1946*. p 4

²⁰⁷ Ibid. p 4

²⁰⁸ Education Department, *Report on Education for the year 1950*. p 5

Education in 1950 showed that while the apprentices were achieving better results in their practical work, they were struggling with the English on the theoretical side.²⁰⁹ In 1954 there were about one hundred in training. The BPCs' Apprenticeship Scheme proved to be the most successful of the post-war development schemes in the Colony. It provided trained mechanics and other skilled trade workmen. On Tarawa the different government departments conducted English classes in the evening for government employees. These included policemen, wireless operators, and clerks. The English courses were to aid government's own personnel to remedy the lack of English in the workforce. Government placed great hope in future graduates from KGV School to redress the problem of English.²¹⁰

Post-war Teacher Training

To help address the acute shortage of trained teachers the Education department designed a one-year course for nine KGV boys at the KGV new site on Abemama from 1947-48. The Director of Education and the Assistant Master of the school conducted this training.²¹¹ The Fiji scheme provided eight teachers who had been trained at the Nasinu Teacher Training College by 1949.²¹² In 1954 another three underwent teacher training at KGV in Bikenibeu. One of these was a girl who became the first woman teacher in the colony in 1955. The hope was that by 1956 KGV graduates should be adequately qualified to begin a two year course of teacher training. Another two teachers were sent on a one year refresher course to Christchurch Teacher Training College.²¹³

²⁰⁹ Ibid. p 5

²¹⁰ Education Department, *Report on Education for the year 1954*. p 3

²¹¹ Hard, *Report on Education for the year 1947*. p 2

²¹² Education Department, *Report on Education for the year 1950*, p 6

²¹³ Education Department, *Report for the year 1954*; p 6

Post War Education Policy

Prewar GEIC education policy was based on the assumption of the colonial personnel that only a few locals were required for the work in the colonial administration. KGV was supposed to fill this need. Subsequently locals began occupying the positions of clerks, typists, messengers, teachers, radio operators and store keepers.²¹⁴ The curriculum was geared to training for technical and skilled vacancies in the workforce as defined by the colonial government rather than offering a curriculum designed to meet the needs of the Kiribati population, such as personnel, academic or cultural.

In 1945, an educational policy was proposed to make schools conform to the general policy of the Colony in preparing staff for the not so distant future. The policy after the War was what the Colonial officials thought the GEIC's manpower needs were going to be. The policy was also driven by the absence of previously generated revenue for the education of children in the Banaban community, who had resettled in Fiji after 1945 due to the combined effects of war, famine and the distribution or payment of phosphate mining royalties of the island into the areas where people lived.²¹⁵ Education policy was seen as being responsive to the 'remote' and 'scattered' nature of the small islands.

The central underpinning factor contributing to the lack of clear educational policy in the colony was that Britain did not have a definite and common education policy for its colonies.²¹⁶ It had general guidelines from the Colonial Office in London, but the implementation of these was left to the discretion and motivation of individual colonial officials in each colony.²¹⁷ On the other hand, it was probable that officials in London could not have begun to understand educational issues in the remote atolls of the GEIC and that to them local planning had a better chance of success.

²¹⁴ Hard, *Report on Education for the year 1946*. p 1

²¹⁵ Schutz, B., et.al., 'Adjustment: Problems of growth and change, 1892 to 1944.' p 84

²¹⁶ F. M. Keesing, 1937, *Education in Pacific Countries*, Kelly and Walsh, Ltd. p 20

²¹⁷ C. Whitehead, 'Education in British Colonial Dependencies: 1919-1939'. p 72.

A revision of the policy reflected new directions. This was for the education of a selected few for university level in preparation to take over the responsibilities of government and eventual independence. This objective was a continuation of what began before the war, but this time a well connected and carefully selected few were being taken up to the top of the education ladder. By providing primary schools which were distinct from village and church schools some were able to access opportunities in Fiji and elsewhere by virtue of attendance at those schools. A class system was created in society. The sons and daughters of a privileged few whose parents were already employed at high levels in government ministries gained favourable access to education opportunities in Fiji and elsewhere. The GEIC Education Department, Survey of Education for three years, has the following to say:

Government has established primary schools at the main centres of population and in localities whose mission education does not suffice to meet local requirements. In practice a limit is imposed by the available accommodation and teachers, on the number of children who can be educated. (d) There are two Government Secondary residential Schools in the Colony, one for boys and one for girls. Each draws its pupils by competitive examinations from any school in the Colony, although in practice most pupils come from Government Primary and Island Council Schools (f).²¹⁸

The children of government employees were destined also for positions of power and influence as they had access to better life chances, opportunities and networks than the children of ordinary citizens or non-formal educated parents. These elite few had a head start and gradually began to regard these opportunities as their right.

The second aim of the 1945 policy was to provide “general improvement in the education of the majority of the people to support the first policy by providing a sounder base with

²¹⁸ Education Department, Survey of Education for three years ended Dec. 31, 1963. Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, Tarawa, p 13. Appendix B: Explanatory Notes on Structure of the Education system, Types of School: d and f.

wider and better understanding of responsibilities of the future.”²¹⁹ This statement implies that it was understood that people needed to be able to engage with political processes in order for it to work, and that people would be required to take on the leadership of the nation in the future. This policy was looking ahead to independence and attempting to build notions of citizenship and ideas of nationhood through education policies.

Government Primary Schools after World War Two

The colonial government established a primary school for the education of children of the Kiribati and Tuvaluan workers of the BPC on Banaba in 1946. A teacher was sent from the Education department on Abemama to take charge of this school at the beginning of 1946. The classrooms were not big enough to accommodate all the children with only one teacher, girls were excluded. The new school had 75 boys on its roll.²²⁰ A grant under the Colonial Development and Welfare Scheme enabled the erection of a new building.²²¹ Girls were included as the new construction was built to cater for 300 children. The Colonial Government received some revenue from BPC for the education of these children. Their education was therefore deemed valid on primarily financial grounds.

The second government primary school was established on Bairiki, South Tarawa as a consequence of the increasing number of government employees on this islet. The children from the local village were also admitted. The school began as an LMS school under the charge of an ex-Mission Kiribati woman who was trained at Kosrae. The woman who became the headmistress had had some ‘experience in mission schools’ and

²¹⁹ Hard, *Report on Education for the year 1946*, p 1

²²⁰ *Ibid.* p 1

²²¹ Hard, *Report on Education for the year 1948*. p 2

understood and spoke some English.²²² The parents of the children at the two new government primary schools were already in employment.

By 1954 the colonial education department had under its control seven primary schools, five of which were on Tarawa, Banaba and Christmas Island. They were day schools attended by both boys and girls. This was government initial attempt at the education of girls. The admissions into these schools' were selected from the Missions' Village Schools. The total intakes could be between 40 and 200 depending on the size of the classrooms and the number of teachers. The object of these schools was to supply KGV School that had been in operation for a year and the Elaine Bernacchi School (EBS) for girls when it opened in August, 1959. Government primary schools were supposed to provide students with a sound primary education.²²³ The GEIC Annual Summary Progress of Education, 1969 had the following to say:

1. (i) Primary Schools: Government Primary Schools are situated at the main centres of government and are constructed of permanent materials. They are well equipped and have qualified staffs. Children are admitted at the age of six years. (ii) Local Government Primary Schools, previously known as Island Council Schools are equipped and staffed on the same scale as Government Primary Schools. While the majority of schools are small, one or two teacher schools, the newest are large six teacher schools in permanent materials. (iii) Mission Primary Schools – most of these admit selected pupils from village schools at the age of 8, though some admit children at 6 years. Some schools admit boarders as well as day pupils. Mission schools are registered as primary schools, as opposed to village schools, if their standard is considered to be comparable to that in Local Government Primary Schools. (iv) Mission Village Schools: These are of a lesser standard than the Mission Primary Schools. They are poorly equipped and the instruction is generally given by teachers with inadequate education and training. Secondary schools: (i) The Government co-educational residential school draws its pupils by competitive examination from all primary schools. The examination is conducted in English. Most of those admitted come from government and local government schools. (ii) Mission secondary schools: the Catholic Mission conducts two secondary schools for boys and girls respectively. The Gilbert and Ellice

²²² Hard, *Report on Education for the year 1946*. p 1

²²³ Education Department, *Report for the year 1954*. p 2

Island Church each run one co-educational junior secondary school. These four schools are residential and take pupils up to Form III.²²⁴

Government and Missions had separate systems of selection into their secondary schools. The curriculum became centralized and controlled by the colonial administration with the introduction of the Colony Form III Examinations in 1963. Students competed for places at KGV and EBS owing to their being the only government schools and therefore deemed to be of better standard, better equipped as well as having very low fees compared to those charged by Church schools.

Almost all of the teachers in Mission schools were Mission trained; and supplies of school material and equipment were not as good in quality as those in government schools. The education of the selected few militated against Kiribati customary sense of equality, that every one is the same and therefore should be treated alike. This inequality had an alienation affect that kept parents and communities disengaged from the processes of government education but not from mission education. The people especially the adherents of each Church were closer to their evangelising mission more so than to the government. In the early 1960s the girls attending the Elaine Bernacchi School at Bikenibeu, Tarawa, were mostly daughters of government employees and some from BPC workers on Banaba and Nauru. There were very few girls accessing education from the majority of ordinary families on Tarawa. These were not engaged in any form of government employment. According to the GEIC Annual Summary Progress Report of Education for 1969:

(i) Government Primary Schools are situated in the main centres of government and are constructed of permanent materials. They are well equipped and have qualified staffs. Pupils are admitted at the age of six years, preference being given to the children of government officials.
(iii) Mission Village Schools are of a lesser standard than the Mission Primary Schools. They are poorly equipped and instruction is generally given by local pastors and catechists with no recognised teaching

²²⁴ Department of Education, Annual Summary Progress of Education 1969. Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, Tarawa, April, 1970; p 16

*qualifications. They enroll children between the ages of 8 and 16. This type of school is found in practically every village in the colony.*²²⁵

Educational administration, and staffing after the war

The Education Department composed of the Director of Education, six local Assistant Masters and one Clerk in training. The former Head Master of the Banaban School was appointed Director of Education. Towards the end of 1946, one of the masters of KGV at Abemama took over charge of the Government Primary School at Banaba leaving only two members of staff only at KGV, on Abemama. The Tuvalu school lost one of its teachers to Fiji where the colony had to supply a teacher in line with the scheme of educating its students in Fiji. Thus the government boarding schools were somewhat short staffed.²²⁶

In 1950 the post of the director of education was filled after being vacant for a year. The new director shifted his headquarters back to South Tarawa as new plans had confirmed Tarawa as the headquarters for the GEIC. KGV School remained on Abemama under the control of an Assistant masters assisted by two other teachers. They were waiting for new school buildings on Bikenibeu, South Tarawa. The Tuvalu school had three local teachers. There was only one teacher for the Banaban School. BPC had completed the construction of the new school with funds from the Colonial Development and Welfare Grant. The teacher for the school was greatly helped by three assistants. Similarly, the government primary school on Bairiki was staffed with five teachers.²²⁷

The new Director of Education lamented the fact that he could not keep up regular contact and better communication with the four government schools and the Missions' because of lack of staff, transport and the geographical layout of the islands. These factors, too, added to the difficulty of direct contact with administrative officials such as High Commission officers outside the colony. Many "of them had never been to the

²²⁵ Department of Education, *Annual Summary Progress of Education*, April 1970. G.E.I.C. Tarawa. p. 16

²²⁶ Hard, *Report on Education for the year 1946*. p 2

²²⁷ Education Department, 1950. *Report on education for the year 1950*. p 2

colony and were not aware of its particular needs. They had no first hand picture of the colony's unique circumstances and requirements yet made decisions regarding the colony,"²²⁸ even the progress of students in Fiji rested with them.

School Curricula after World War Two

*The curricula of Mission village schools is extremely narrow and limited, tuition being confined chiefly to religious instruction plus a limited amount of mechanical arithmetic and some reading. The curriculum laid down by Government for its primary schools at present inclines to the academic side and is definitely beyond the capacity of village pastors to understand, follow and teach, owing to their own limited knowledge and to the fact that their primary task is that of religious instruction...*²²⁹

Under "curriculum" in the Annual Education Reports there was no mention of any syllabus or what was actually taught in any of the subjects. The GEIC Education report for 1950 stated education was made compulsory between the ages of 7 and 16 under Island Regulations. After World War Two the Education Department continued to complain about the 'narrow and limited'²³⁰ curriculum of Missions Village Schools with their 'mechanical arithmetic and some reading'. The instructions at the catechists and pastors' schools were overly religious to the detriment of 'general education for living'.²³¹ The Missions were being criticized. They were blamed for their lack of resources and inability to improve the situation in their schools.

Conclusion

From 1945 to 1950 rebuilding and maintenance work occurred in both mission and government schools. Education in Fiji was a necessity as the colony needed time to recover structurally and in terms of personnel after the war.

²²⁸ Education Department, *Report on Education for the Year 1950*. p 4

²²⁹ Ibid. p 3

²³⁰ Ibid. p 3.

²³¹ Ibid. p 3.

Movements towards encouraging independence and eventual intentions to decolonize Kiribati may have been part of the reorganization and restructuring of education after the War. This was reflected in a new expansion to the education policy, in which certain people were sent to Fiji and New Zealand to study at college and university level, these chosen few were being groomed to take over the administration and governance of Kiribati.

These sponsored individuals did do well and returned to Kiribati to work in the colonial administration, holding civil service positions through to independence. The international expansion, however, was not limited to tertiary education, as children as young as primary school level (around 100) children went to Fiji as Fiji's primary schools were perceived to be of a higher standard. The children selected were attending government schools. None of the educational reports mention any other selection criteria for this group of children. A few of these children coped well, but most were repatriated due to poor performance and behavioural problems.

At the same time, whilst there were changes in circumstances as a consequence of the war, negative discourses about the quality of teaching in mission schools and the content of the teaching curricula continued, as did the lack of resources and funding to support mission schools.

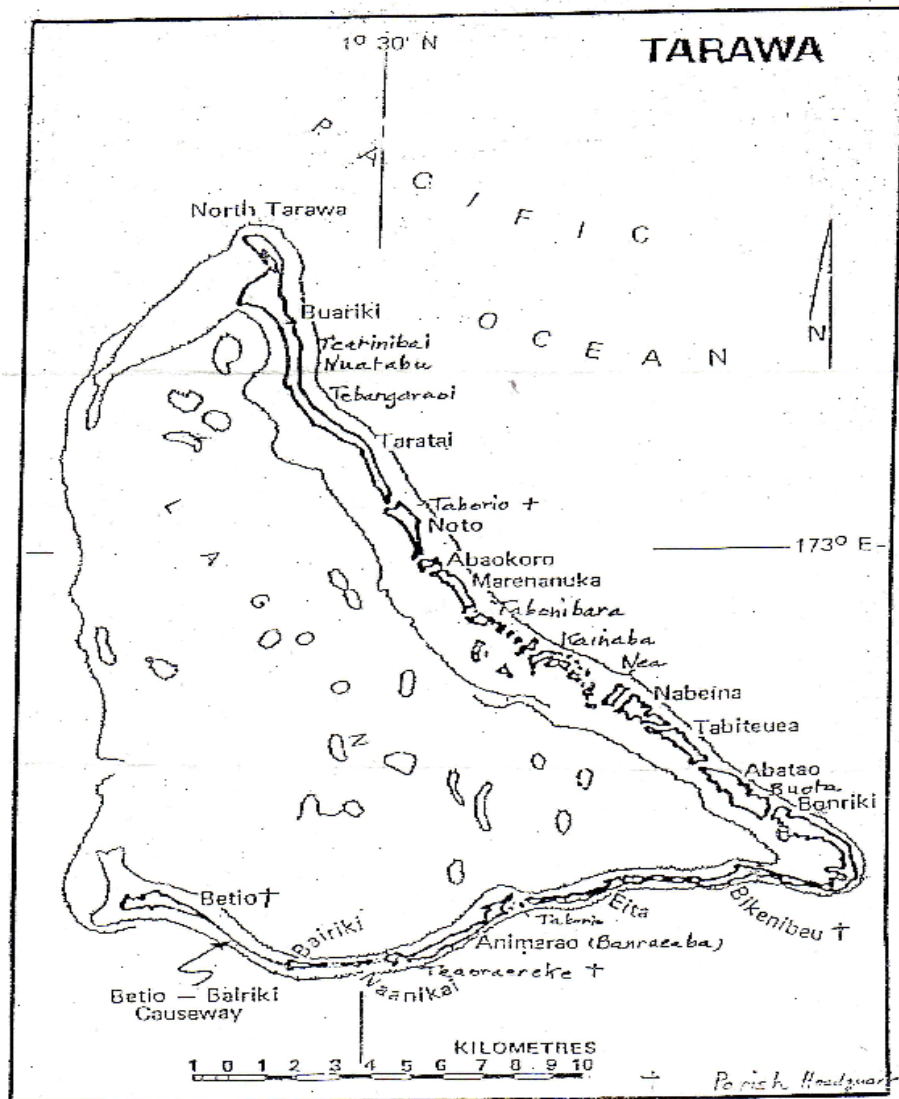
The colonial government's establishment of very few schools to meet the needs of the administration was the beginning of an elitist education system that persisted beyond independence in 1979. With government starting but a few primary schools it was obvious that it had no intention of furthering its support to the majority of the colony's students in Mission schools. Its support for only two secondary schools was enough evidence that an academic education was not for all. It was discriminatory and restrictive from the start. With independence on the horizons it seemed the educated few would occupy the positions in government to rule the majority of the populace who held only a primary education.

This gave the missions no choice but to continue to educate, to educate for church work as well as for the country. The churches really struggled to keep providing education for the majority of children in the newly independent Kiribati. Government schools were following a non-contextualised curriculum which was based on colonial government needs rather than the well-being of the people.

At home, a quiet revolution was beginning with plans for a separate school for girls. The mission had always been sensitive to and accommodating of local cultural practices in its school system including the customary roles of boys and girls. Traditional gender roles were soon to begin a process of transformation and change with the opening of a girls' school at Taborio in 1955.

Chapter 7

The Founding of Taborio: 1952-55

Map of Tarawa²³²

²³² Kiribati Teachers' College, 1974, Bikenibeu, Tarawa.

Introduction

The first secondary school for girls in Kiribati²³³ is situated on the northern tip of Notoue village on the lagoon side of Taborio in North Tarawa. Immaculate Heart College (IHC), established by the Sacred Heart Mission in 1955, is commonly and simply known as Taborio.

Taborio changed the nature of the education for girls. It built on indigenous education processes which endowed children with the knowledge and skills required for life in the island environment. It added a Christian education ethic that ‘demands a commitment to creed’ defined in a doctrine that encloses ‘a code of moral behaviour.’²³⁴ Central to this Christian education ethic is belief in God’s love and responding to that love in a personal relationship with him.

In most countries of the Pacific, women were and are still the carriers and perpetrators of culture. As late as the 1950s in Kiribati when IHC was established, the primary educational emphasis of girls was on being good Christian mothers. Taborio complemented the crucial role of the home as the place of social and cultural learning.

This chapter includes the building of Taborio, its founder, the importance of its physical structure in the life and routines of the school; the new buildings as the school expanded, the *mwaneaba* and its role in the school and the Berness Hall.²³⁵ It will also look at the finance issues, how the early students managed fee payments. I also consider the Curriculum and educational Philosophy of the time as manifested in the life, routines and identities at Taborio through the Curriculum and extra-curricular activities that became part of life of students in the school.

²³³ Some of the material in this chapter has based previously written for the Golden Jubilee of the school in 2005:- A. Talu, *Recta Sapere*, privately printed, IHC., Taborio, 2005. I cite the interviews conducted with certain individuals, most of them were ex-students and former teachers for this work, as noted in the footnotes.

²³⁴ Holy Eucharist, 2007, *Church News Bulletin*, Laucala Bay Parish, Suva, 2007, September 9. p 5

²³⁵ Please see Appendix 4, p 146: Berness Hall

Staffing is very important in any teaching institutions. Cultural literacy is also essential in a non-western educational climate. This cultural sensitivity is examined through the work of the many overseas volunteers²³⁶ who have participated in the education of the students at Taborio since 1971. It is crucial to have English speakers in a school where non-English students learn English as a second language. However, for students to be able to acquire a good grasp and fluency of a second language they need to be well versed and conversant in their mother tongue. I begin with a little historical account of the first students and teachers of the school.

Taborio's Founder and Architect

Taborio was the Sacred Heart Mission's second attempt at providing formal education for girls.²³⁷ The founder of the school was Reverend Octave Terrienne, MSC. He was born on 9 September, 1902, and ordained as a priest, a missionary of the Sacred Heart, in January 27, 1929. He was the third to be consecrated Vicar Apostolic (Bishop) for the Kiribati Vicariate on 25 June, 1938, in his home town of Nantes, France. He arrived in Kiribati in 1930 and worked as parish priest of Tabiteuea prior to his appointment to the episcopate.²³⁸ At the time of his consecration as Bishop he was said to be the youngest Bishop in the world. On his return to Kiribati as Bishop he made his headquarters in Tanaeang, Tabiteuea.

As parish priest, he was reputed to be a model pastor and administrator. He was very close to people and was much loved, especially by the people of Tabiteuea. In any conflicts between the people and the colonial government or the British Phosphate Commissioners he always helped the people and advocated for them. When he recognised that the Catholics were being exploited by the *Boboti* (Cooperative Society) on Tabiteuea, he responded by starting a community run co-operative.²³⁹ He spent time

²³⁶ It is with deep and sincere gratitude to the many volunteers who have graced IHC or CSC Taborio up to the present with their presence, their time, and their sharing of themselves and their expertise in educating students. *Kam bati n raba*.

²³⁷ The first is described in Chapter 4, pp. 52-56

²³⁸ Office of Bishop.

²³⁹ Personal Communication, Father Kerouanton, October 22, 1907.

talking and listening to the people and their needs and concerns. As Bishop he established St. Patrick's School in Tabiteuea for boys in the south in 1939 and St. Joseph's College, Tabwiroa, Abaiang, catered for boys in the north.²⁴⁰

Constructing Taborio

The immediate need in establishing the school was buildings for accommodation, classrooms and recreation. The Builders and labourers employed were mostly from Tabiteuea and known to the Bishop prior to the commencement of the construction work. Other employees were from North Tarawa and Abaiang. Tetaua, who later became a renowned mission architect and builder, was the master builder but the Bishop was around all the time, keeping an eye on the work. There was an instance when the men were working on laying the foundation and they did not do it the way he wanted, so the Bishop insisted that everything had to be undone and started again.²⁴¹

The foundation of the first main double-storey building was measured at about 0.25m above the ground, 25.20m in length and 13.60m width. Upstairs were sleeping quarters while downstairs was divided into a work place for the Sisters, the three classrooms and the sewing room. (The body of the building was demolished in the late 1980s as the wooden framework had become unsafe, but the foundations remain intact.) Most of the buildings were made of permanent materials. A whole building for the primary section of the school, was built along with a *mwaneaba*, dining room, bathrooms and trunkroom. Three huge round cement water tanks for collecting rain water, supplemented water supplies from the three wells at the school. The water tanks are still in use today. The classrooms had locally made desks. The masonite walls painted in dark green colour became blackboards until the school was able to provide proper ones.²⁴²

The construction work was an enormous task for those workmen because everything was done by hand. The land had to be cleared of tall grass, unnecessary shrubs, creeping

²⁴⁰ Personal communication, Kum ON, March 9, 2008

²⁴¹ Pers. comm. with Sr. Teneti Bakarereua (one of the first intakes of students), February 3, 2005

²⁴² Pers. comm. with Clare Hickey, Letter, March 19, 2005

plants and the many stones. After completion of the main building, gardens had to be marked and the edges of the triangles, rectangles and ovals lined with flat stones to keep in the good soil brought in from the bush. Roads and pathways were marked in the same way and the girls had to fill them in with reef-mud from the sea. The new school needed a seawall on the lagoon side so all the rubbish and stones had to be collected and used to build the seawall. Even today, the sea wall has to be repaired every so often especially when there is an extraordinarily high tide.²⁴³

New buildings for the expanding school

More new buildings have been erected over the years to cater for the school's expanding needs. The first of the extra classrooms were a set of two, east of the main building used for Form 4 and 5. They were built by Brother Tokoriri Toaba, MSC and his men. With the exception of sand and gravel, building materials were transported across the lagoon by launch, the *St. Joseph* from Teaoraereke and the *Jacinta*, the College launch. The *Jacinta* was Bishop's Terrienne's transport which he bequeathed to the College. Ioteba Tekima was the faithful and dedicated launch man throughout the active life of the *Jacinta*, among the many other duties he rendered the College. Later Brother Gautier, a French MSC., built a new bathroom. It was the last he built before he left for Australia in May 1971. He passed away soon after his arrival in Sydney. Bishop Terrienne's successor was Bishop Peter Guichet, MSC. He arrived in the Colony in 1962. He made his headquarters in Teaoraereke. The old Bishop's house was renamed St. Anne's and became the property of the school. Sisters and Volunteers had the use of St. Anne before residences were built.²⁴⁴

With co-education in 1975, a boys' dormitory was added to the two classrooms. The boys slept upstairs and another three classrooms became available. Also during this time two houses were built for teachers. These were used at first for volunteers. They have been joined and subdivided and gone through many changes over the years. A chapel of local

²⁴³ Pers. comm. with Agnes P. Talia, June 10, and Sister Teneti Bakarereua: February 3, 2005.

²⁴⁴ Talu, 'Recta Sapere', pp 25-26.

material with a cement floor was built. As principal of Taborio in 1985, Sister Helen Simpson, built a chaplain's house overlooking the passage. The school never had a chaplain even though at times it was the most desirable requirement from the view of teachers. The house for the chaplain became another residence for overseas volunteers. As principal, Sister Alice Tuana, built an extension to St. Anne's which then became a new convent for the Sisters.

Finally an army of white ants won the war over spirited efforts to preserve the first original building on the school compound. A new dormitory for the girls had to be built.²⁴⁵ The new site was just next to the Sisters' new convent. This meant taking over the boys' area. The boys moved to the lagoon side and the girls to the passage side. The boys had new sleeping quarters made of local material. The Chapel was rebuilt to make it larger and in line with the classrooms. In 1989, the third *mwaneaba* on Taborio was constructed in the passage where it now stands. It was a major piece of work since its foundation was laid in the reef-mud and two causeways had to be constructed to allow for accessibility at high tide.²⁴⁶

The *mwaneaba* and its role in the school

The very first school *mwaneaba* was constructed of permanent material with a raised floor. The rectangular edges were cemented but enclosing a floor of sand and gravel. The floor was covered with thick mats made from whole pandanus leaves. Every year after the August holiday, each team made a new mat for its sitting place in the *mwaneaba*. There was competition involved as there would be points for the team that won this mat-making race. This involved collecting pandanus leaves from the bush, removing the thorns and making them pliable and soft for weaving. This whole process would take a whole week at the most.

²⁴⁵ Pers. comm. with Sister Nora Hanrahan, March 31, 2005.

²⁴⁶ Please, see Appendix 4, p 146, the latest of the buildings: The Berness Hall

In a new educational institute like Taborio, the school *mwaneaba* retained familiar architectural features. Each team had a place where its members sat during the weekly school meeting with the principal. Recreation over the weekends took place in that *mwaneaba*. The school guests were welcomed and entertained with Taborio singing, recorder playing and drama. Here too were performed the most ‘famous’ Taborio end of year concerts for parents and friends of the school.²⁴⁷

Many prize-giving ceremonies were carried out in that *mwaneaba*. Last but not least the most popular and most longed for Saturday film! For many years the Schutz and the Edwards families provided Immaculate Heart College with this weekend movie.²⁴⁸ The school also borrowed films from the hospital. In the early 1980s, the original *mwaneaba* was replaced. The new *mwaneaba* was called *te Ngaoniman*. The name literally meant a bird’s nest. The name signified that in Taborio students learnt to fly before actually taking off. The third *mwaneaba*, which is still there in 2008 was the one built in the passage.²⁴⁹

Fees and Finance Issues at Taborio

As a Church school, the buildings at Taborio were financed and built by the Church. The Bishop also obtained some financial assistance for the construction of the buildings from Europe or Australia where most of the missionaries at that time were from, especially from the missionaries’ own home parishes and their friends. For example, in the early days Taborio girls wore a gold Sunday dress with a hat to Church. These clothes came from a businessman, a friend of Sister Elizabeth Hammond in Brisbane.²⁵⁰ The workers for the buildings were from Tabiteuea where the Bishop had lived before becoming Bishop and the rest were from North Tarawa and Abaiang.²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ Please see Appendix 6, for Singing Classes and Musical productions at Taborio, pp 149-150

²⁴⁸ Pers. comm. with Sister Nora Hanrahan, March 31, 2006

²⁴⁹ Talu, ‘Recta Sapere’, p 18

²⁵⁰ Pers. comm. with Clare Hickey, March 19, 2005

²⁵¹ Pers. comm. with Sister Teneti Bakarereua, February 3, 2005

The fees charged by the school barely covered food costs. The diet offered was therefore very simple. For breakfast there was toddy and bread or biscuits with some grated coconut or a piece of coconut. The main meal usually consisted of fish, rice or wheat and coconut. There was a light evening meal. On Saturday the midday meal could be salt fish and coconut, sometimes *te tuae* and coconut.²⁵² The fish was cooked on a charcoal fire, and bread baked in 44-gallon drum. The girls made bread and prepared the rice or wheat for the ladies who came to cook the midday and evening meals. The school had toddy cutters and fishermen and they were paid according to the amount of toddy or the catch of fish they brought to the school on a daily basis.²⁵³

In 1965, the fees in Taborio were £30 pounds a year. Girls whose parents lived on outer islands and were not engaged in any job that could earn them any money apart from copra cutting, paid fees in local food, salt fish, *kamwaimwai*, and any other products that they could send to the school. The school then bought this and the money was credited to their daughter's account.²⁵⁴ Colonial financial assistance to Church secondary schools began with a grant of £2 per student in the late 1950s. This was gradually increased until it reached £10. It was discontinued in 1978.

When Taborio and Tabwiroa prepared for co-education each received a government grant of A\$10,000 for dormitories and classrooms. Taborio received a further grant of \$5000 for a Science lab and equipment while Tabwiroa missed out on its approved grant for a A\$20,000 Science and Home Economic building. In 1970 the colonial government paid allowances to all VSOs teaching in Church schools until 1984 when the number was reduced to two for each Church. In the 1990s the Kiribati government contributed A\$8,400 to the KPC and Catholic schools to subsidize the salaries of two qualified local teachers. Government also bore the costs of the National Form 5 examination fees and postage; as well as some transport costs for students returning home at the end of their studies and the new intakes into secondary schools.²⁵⁵

²⁵² Pers. comm. with Agnes P. Talia, June 10, 2005

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Pers. comm. with Bwebwenteiti Tabuaka, November 27, 2007

²⁵⁵ A. Talu, 1993, 'Towards Quality in Education' in *Atoll Politics: The Republic of Kiribati*, (edit)

Today, the Kiribati government pays twelve teachers in each of the Church senior secondary schools. Degree and diploma holders who work in Church schools receive the salaries of \$A7,600 a year compared to the \$A8,400 a graduate receives in a government school.²⁵⁶ Because they are Church schools, the Churches have to pay the difference of the teachers' salaries. Also every year Government provides teacher training for one teacher from each Church at the University of the South Pacific (USP) or any other teacher training institution.

The First Students at Taborio

Immaculate Heart College was opened in September, 1955 with a roll of 49 girls from all over the colony, Catholics and Protestants alike.²⁵⁷ According to the school register the first 20 students arrived on September 1st, three arrived on the second, two on the third, six on the eighth, three on the ninth, three on the tenth until the last to be admitted on the 11th December 1955. The term began in August and it was impossible to fix a definite date for the students to arrive at the school because of the many stops made by the *Santa Teretia* in visiting the islands. The *Santa Teretia* carried cargo, missionaries, teachers and students, dropping them off for holidays and picking them up again to take them back to school for the beginning of the term. It had three schools to service, St. Joseph's College, Tabwiroa in Abaiang, St. Patrick's in Tanaeang, Tabiteuea North and Immaculate Heart College, Taborio, in North Tarawa. Many times students could either arrive very early or very late, and on rare occasions on time!

In those days too, the ship also transported students' fees paid in food, salted-dried fish, *te tuae*, *te kabubu* and *kamwaimwai* from their home islands to the schools. Though this exchange system has receded into history it was a very practical and inclusive means of fee payment which enabled access to education for families who might be cash poor but

Howard Van Trease, Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury and Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific; pp 243-244

²⁵⁶ Catholic Education Office files.

²⁵⁷ Please see Appendix 5 for a list of the first intake of students at Immaculate Heart College, pp 147-148

rich in other resources and supported traditional skills and ways of knowing. Those students whose parents were working in the colonial administration in Bairiki and Betio, in the colonial central hospital in Abaokoro, or in the Co-Operative or Wholesale Society and other commercial companies on South Tarawa, were able to pay fees in cash. The parents working in the BPC on Banaba and Nauru could pay the fees of their daughters either in cash or food, often tins of biscuits and cases of corned beef.²⁵⁸

On admission into the College, each girl was given a number that became hers for the duration of her time in school. The number was cross-stitched onto the girl's school uniforms and her personal clothes to assist with organization and washing. The girls were arranged in the numbers they were given on arrival. Their ages ranged from six to nineteen. For classes they were organized into three separate groups: the juniors for the primary section of the school were taught by Sister Margaret Grant, the middle group by Sister Denis O'Shea and seniors by Sister Thomas Crowe (now Sister Aileen Crowe). Because many of the juniors were too small and they cried at night, the senior girls became their caretakers. This was an informal arrangement as most of the girls were related and some of the parents of the small girls had already approached the big girls to keep an eye on their daughters. They were given dolls and other toys to play with and had to be reminded often not to be too noisy and disturb the seniors in their studies. The small girls had their learning in plays and songs which became very handy as items for performance in the village *mwaneaba* in Nooto during big feast days, including Easter, the Assumption on 15 August and Christmas or in the school *mwaneaba* on parents' day.²⁵⁹

The First Teachers at IHC

Sister Thomas Crowe (now Sister Aileen Crowe) an Australian, was the first principal of IHC Taboio in 1955. She arrived in Kiribati in 1950 and was teaching at St. Patrick's College, Tanaeang, Tabiteuea north when called to Taborio in 1955. Sister left Taborio in

²⁵⁸ Pers. comm. with Takenrerei Taukorori, May 15, 2005

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

1959 to return to Australia where she worked until 1983 whence she then returned to Kiribati where she now lives. She was a qualified secondary school teacher.

Sister Denis O'Shea was Irish. She also pioneered the establishment of the school for girls on Marakei. She left Kiribati in 1993 for St. Joseph's Home in Kensington, Sydney where she passed away.

Sister Michell Hickey (now Clare Hickey), also a trained secondary school teacher, took over as principal from Sister Aileen Crowe in 1959. When Sister left Taborio she returned to Australia and left the Order. She now lives in Brisbane, Australia.

Sister Catherine Hollis (now Sister Veronica Hollis) arrived in Taborio in 1960 and was principal of the school from 1961-68. She was in Marakei for a year and principal of St. Joseph's College in 1976. Sister was back in Taborio from 1978-83. Her last year in Taborio was in 1986. Sister is now in Australia.

Curriculum and Educational Philosophy of the Time: Student life, routines and identities at Taborio

All students at Taborio wore uniforms daily, these are distinctive and are still a strong feature of the school identity today. Uniforms were popular in schools in those days. They were also important to a feeling of unity at the school and they were also made by the students. The girls who were good at needlework were in their element in attending to them.²⁶⁰ In late 1980s, uniforms were made by *Teitoiningaina* (Catholic Women's Club) in Teoraereke. Today students provide their own Sunday wear but it has to be white, where previously it was gold for the girls. The girls changed over to wearing white for Sundays after the school went co-ed as the boys had always had white. Gold and blue were colours associated with the school. Today school uniforms are purchased from the

²⁶⁰ Pers. comm. with Clare Hickey, March 19, 2005

Kiribati Garment and *Isabeal Garment*, both private businesses on Betio. This change is a result from the reduction of expertise in staff. A Sister always supervised sewing.

The everyday wear in school was a uniform of a dark navy tunic with pleats and a light yellow blouse; for Sunday a yellow dress with blue trimming and straw hat to Mass. The day began at 6 a.m. with a 'call' prayer and then personal hygiene in preparation for Mass in the parish church. After Mass there were general housekeeping tasks, preparing breakfast, sweeping round the buildings and picking up leaves under the breadfruit trees, bread making, feeding the pigs and fowls. The girls in the kitchen usually prepared what was to be cooked for lunch and tea. The women from the villages did the actual cooking as well as cooked the bread. Nei Maereiti Tekiera, a parent at the school, was one of the many who had helped in the kitchen for a considerable number of years. Even after the death of her husband, Tekiera, who did a lot of odd jobs for the school, stayed on to cook for the girls.

After breakfast classes began. There was a break at 10.30 a.m. and a longer one for lunch at 1 p.m. After afternoon classes the students changed into their work dresses. It was time to attend to their afternoon tasks, gardening, collecting firewood, feeding the fowls, the pigs, and collecting coconuts. There was music and drama between 4.30 p.m. and 6 p.m. Each form had a set time for bathing before tea at 6 p.m. After evening prayer in the church there was study until 9 p.m. when it was time for bed and lights out at 9.30 p.m. at night.

The week-end program was slightly different. Saturday morning was for general cleaning of the buildings and the whole Taborio area. The Parish Church had to be swept and brass vases and candle stands needed cleaning with brasso. Lunch was held outside in the open as the dining room was still wet after scrubbing. There was personal washing, clothes washing before and after lunch and then sports from 2 to 4 p.m. The four teams in the school, Carmel, Issoudun, Fatima and Lourdes, competed against each other in sports in friendly matches. The games were basket ball, volley ball, tennis, ball games, relay races

and flat races. Then there were the afternoon charges followed by bath, the evening meal, evening prayers and the movie.

The Sunday programme was more relaxed. Mass was at 9 a.m., followed by singing where the girls learnt the hymns from the Church hymn book. Father Joseph Hirsch, a French MSC, the parish priest for North Tarawa and the College, taught the students these hymns. Father was very musical with a good singing voice. He translated a number of hymns from Latin to the Kiribati language and taught them to the College girls. After lunch there were sports for those who were interested, reading or letter writing to parents and pen-friends. The girls were to write every month to their parents. The end of each term provided time for holiday for the girls whose parents worked on Tarawa. Those girls who had relatives on Tarawa and had their parents' permission to holiday with them were able to do so. The rest would stay in the school and usually one of the Sisters had charge of them. Parents could visit any time, especially the outer island dwellers that came to Tarawa for some reason or other. Taborio would be empty during the Christmas holiday as everyone went home for the long holiday.

Systems of punishment and reward at Taborio

To help inculcate in the girls good habits an 'Honour Roll' system was used. Each girl received ten points each week. Marks were deducted for not speaking English, arriving late, not turning up for daily chores and disturbing study. Good marks were awarded for extra efforts at speaking English, being helpful and generous and being faithful to one's task. The honour roll was awarded every Friday evening at a meeting with the Principal. The girl with the highest points at the end of the year received the prize for conduct. Also every year, the school had a visiting priest who ran a weekend retreat for the whole school where silence was practised as an aid for reflection and personal prayer. The retreat master gave two talks, and there was time for reading spiritual books, especially the lives of the saints. The girls leaving the school were also encouraged to think about their future, and what to do with their lives including marriage, religious life and careers.

The Saturday movie was an eagerly anticipated event at the end of every week. It also constituted a powerful means of reward and punishment in relation to learning and speaking English whilst at school. Because the girls were so excited about watching movies they tried to speak English throughout the week and avoid bad marks for speaking Kiribati, more than three bad marks each week meant that students would not be allowed to watch the film. The speaking of English rule in the school was perhaps unconsciously used as a means of control; it certainly provided a very peaceful and quiet atmosphere in the place due to the students' limited English language vocabulary.

There were undoubtedly times when the girls wished they could just yap away in their first languages. In the few hours where speaking Kiribati or Tuvaluan was allowed, the school was transformed into a place of noise and chatter. After leaving school and gaining employment the girls came to realize the importance of speaking English in Taborio. Having to speak English had also made them think in English, and it enabled them to do well in their school work and gain employment.

Curriculum and Extra-Curricular Activities

From 1955, the school curriculum reflected the primary aim of the school, to prepare the girls to be good Christians and responsible mothers. We can call this period the revolution because even though Religion was taught daily in class the other subjects taught and accessible to the girls were English, History, Geography, Arithmetic, Algebra, Sewing, Typing and Book-Keeping. The girls learnt typing on the very early typewriters which were slow and heavy, but very faithful and strong. The staff should be commended for the meticulous care they took of the typewriters and sewing machines to keep off the dust and rust.²⁶¹

Singing and the Vernacular were taught by Terubea, a former seminarian of the 1930s from Buota, Abaiang.²⁶² The girls were being taught about Christian marriage, but the rest

²⁶¹ Pers. comm. with Clare Hickey, March 19, 2005

²⁶² Pers. comm. with Teneti Bakarereua, February 3, 2005

of the curriculum did not teach the local skills necessary for life in the islands. At first the senior girls also followed a course in Domestic Science and learnt how to cook a balanced and nutritious meal, to set a Western style table and to serve. These foreign skills were useful as knowledge in themselves. In Kiribati today knives and forks are used at meals with European guests but not for the ordinary meals at home. The learning of these skills soon phased out and the study of the academic subjects completely superseded the school programme. The few who studied shorthand were those who knew some English from home because their fathers were professional people.

In KGV and the Tuvalu schools, boys were educated to be clerks and interpreters. The education offered at Taborio was not different. It also prepared students for the new social and economic order introduced by the colonial government. Taborio school leavers were filling up the clerical posts in offices in South Tarawa. Catholic Educators had decided they were not going to educate Kiribati children who would be overlooked by government when it came to jobs. Also congregational directives to the Sisters urged them always that in the education of youth, 'to spare nothing in order to put their schools on a par with the best educational establishments'²⁶³ offered in the colony. Hence consecutive principals of Taborio and their staff have always strove to educate students for life, one that would fit them for life, both in their own environment and abroad.

As the school progressed there was discussion by Church authority and education personnel to prepare the girls for some Public Examination to help them for future educational pursuits or attaining jobs.²⁶⁴ Four Taborio girls left for Australia in 1958, Tusi Neli and Lily Copeland went straight into doing their Nursing training with the Sacred Heart Sisters in Mooreland, Melbourne. Teneti Bakarereua and Alice Tuana were to complete their secondary education and then to join the religious Congregation of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, in Bowral. Of the eight girls who went to Mooreland only two returned to work in Kiribati and they were Rotia Tito and Irima Edwards. The implication for Kiribati was that educated skilled people began to migrate.

²⁶³ FDNSC Resource Material, Australian Province, Toowoomba, Downs Printing Co. Pty. Ltd., 1977. p 169

²⁶⁴ Pers. comm. Sister Nora Hanrahan, March 31, 2005

In 1962, two Taborio girls, Jane Resture and Tiebane Teaeki, won government scholarships to study in Sydney.²⁶⁵ Taborio was then teaching up to Form 4 level.

When the Primary section phased out in 1965, Taborio only had three forms, 1, 2 and 3. The Colonial government had requested that the Catholic Mission educate up to Form 3 level and to send their students to do Forms 4 and 5 at its government schools in Bikenibeu. The first Taborio girl to continue to KGV/EBS was Rena Reiher in 1967. The apparent setback at the time was that sometimes Taborio had several good students and there were not enough places at KGV/EBS. It was at Form 5 that scholarships were awarded.

At Form 3, a Colony Junior Certificate Examination was held. Candidates from Immaculate Heart College had consistently over a number of years demonstrated a very high standard in the subjects they had presented. The examination papers were set by teachers from different schools and corrected by the examining school. Taborio set the Health Science and Typing papers as it was the only school that taught these subjects. Some of the Sisters were on the committee and helped with the setting of papers, the marking and grading.

At the end of every year the few students who had consistently performed poorly were sent home. Usually they were given a chance to repeat the same form. Many times too this also had something to do with not being able to pay the fees. The Sisters usually prepared them for such departures because when the time came they were sad at not being able to return but were quite resigned that study was not for them. While in indigenous education no girl was excluded from learning the skills needed for life, the introduced education excluded those who could not pay for it (when families could no longer pay school fees with crops,) as well as those who could not manage it. It gave these young girls a sense of inadequacy and lack of confidence in their own abilities.

²⁶⁵ Pers. comm. with Agnes P. Talia, June 10, 2005. Jane Resture and Tiebane married overseas and today live abroad.

Co-education and IHC's transition to become a Catholic Senior College

By 1970, both Taborio and Tabwiroa were back teaching up to Form 5. The colony was moving towards separation and inevitable political independence. It was during this period that it was decided by Bishop Peter Guichet and Church education personnel to make both schools co-educational with junior forms in one area and seniors in another. Besides the question of saving staff by having the junior forms in one school and the seniors in another, was the issue of providing the young people at this stage in their lives with the opportunity to work and study together and learn Christian integrity and respect one for the other. Parents were also demanding further chances for their children at Forms 4 and 5 levels with the accompanying opportunities of obtaining scholarships to study overseas.²⁶⁶

The larger land area available at Tabwiroa made it the obvious choice of location for numbers in the lower forms, while the smaller numbers for Forms 4 and 5 suited Taborio. The two schools became known then as Catholic Junior College (CJC) Tabwiroa, and Catholic Senior College (CSC), Taborio, in 1975. For the first time, male teachers were employed at Taborio as catechist and warden for the boys, sometimes to teach the Kiribati language as well as a work supervisor for the boys. The Kiribati language was taught at IHC for the first five years (1955-1960) when the College first started. It became a teaching subject again soon after co-education. Kararaua Kabiriera was a Music teacher who had come from Tabwiroa where he had spent many years teaching the Kiribati language and singing. He spent two years, 1978-79, teaching these subjects in Taborio. Another new member who joined Taborio staff was Teitiaki Ioteba who taught from 1985-86. Teitiaki was one of those young men who aspired to the priesthood. He spent some years in the seminary in Rabaul, Papua and New Guinea, to do his training in the 1960s. He left the ministry and on his return spent some years teaching in Catholic schools.

²⁶⁶ Education records, Bishop's Archives, Teaoraereke, Tarawa.

Staffing and importance of cultural literacy

At the beginning in 1955, the teaching staff at Immaculate Heart College, Taborio consisted of four Sisters. The small primary section had less than twenty pupils and classes were from 1-3. Often it was the more culturally skilled and aware sister who taught the young ones. She needed to speak the Kiribati language with some fluency and therefore could assist the under-ten in that transition from home to the school culture of Taborio.

Senior girls wanting to become Sisters were required to learn more English and were employed as monitors in the primary section and in the Sewing room depending on their talents. Maria Toauru who eventually married a catechist; Tetiria Kaibeau²⁶⁷ entered the Novitiate as a postulant and decided to return home and settle down in marriage. Tetiria's husband, Rino Nautonga taught in catholic primary schools until he became an MP in *te Auti ni Maungatabu*. Monica Kauea (now Sister Damiana Kauea) did her Novitiate in Australia to become a Daughter of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and became the first local regional superior in Kiribati.

Over time in Kiribati the Churches began to promote the idea that in school, children should be taught the basic skills of everyday life to equip them for adult life and to become useful productive members of the society. Notions of education as a means to producing good citizens were also introduced in the colonial pedagogy despite the colonial government employing a human resource approach to education. From its beginning Catholic Senior College reflected this attitude in its education programme and curricula. Catholic Senior College began small with forty-four male and female students across two classes in Forms 4 and 5. Gradually the number of students increased until there were two Form 4s and eventually two Form 5s. The school was divided into teams – Hartzer with the red colour and Chevalier green.²⁶⁸ With increasing numbers a third team, Leray (after Bishop Leray) was introduced and yellow was its colour. On the

²⁶⁷ Rest in Peace.

²⁶⁸ The school teams worked together in sports and manual work around the school; they were also rewarded as a team.

Taborio uniforms on which IHC had been once proudly cross-stitched, CSC went on instead.²⁶⁹ The Latin school motto, *Recta Sapere*, ‘Relish what is Right’ was changed to ‘Seek Truth’ symbolized by a sailing Kiribati canoe.

A new logo featuring a Kiribati canoe sailing on a sea of three stripes under the Southern Cross constellation was adopted. Bauro Takaria, a gifted artist and student of the school, designed this. The famous blue and gold colours from the IHC days were retained as they had become synonymous with Taborio. In commemoration of the golden jubilee of the school in 2005 - and in the age of computer technology, the design of the school logo was revisited and slightly modified by Teweiariki Teaero, another former student of the school (1978-79) with a view to establishing a stronger coherence between the name of the school and the design, and as an attempt to enhance the aesthetic quality of the design. The canoe had subsequently been converted to a heart-shape and a little cross-beam has been added to the top of the mast to form a cross.²⁷⁰

Curriculum Development, Education and Employment

By 1979, when Kiribati attained independence, the Form Vs in the only Government Schools, KGV and EBS were still doing the British General Certificate of Education ‘O’ Level Examinations (GCE). The Cambridge Examination Board set exams for many of the colonies. The London University Board did this too. Taborio had an Arts stream doing the GCE and its Science students took the New Zealand Form V School Certificate Examinations (NZSC). Because the New Zealand sewing examination was not relevant for Kiribati girls as it dealt mostly with clothing for dwellers in temperate climate, Accounting was introduced to replace Principles of Accounts as an option for the girls.²⁷¹

In 1981, Taborio discontinued with the GCE and took up the NZSC in both Arts and Science. The latter’s South Pacific Options were more relevant to the students. To keep up with relevancy, by mid 1980s a curriculum was prepared for the Kiribati National

²⁶⁹ Pers. comm. with Sister Mary Gormley, July 17, 2005

²⁷⁰ Pers. comm. with Teweiariki Teaero, June 2, 2005

²⁷¹ Pers. comm. with Sister Nora Hanrahan, March 31, 2005

Certificate and was trialled in 1989. In 1993, Taborio began to take in students at Form 1 as Tabwiroa had begun to teach up to Form 5.²⁷²

With the increasing population parents came to realize more than before the importance and the benefits of a secondary education for their children because while people multiplied in number the land resources remained the same. The Kiribati Teachers' College and the Nursing School as well as other places of employment demanded a Form 5 Certificate. (Today they are asking for Form 6 and 7 certificates). Demand for secondary school places exceeded the number of places available. This was the rationale for the examination oriented system that exists in Kiribati.

In the mid 1990s politicians began to work on establishing Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) on each island through a project with Australia to ease the load on secondary schools. Every island was to have one JSS to which all the Class 6 primary school leavers would automatically move into for Forms 1-3. At the end of Form 3 students would sit the entrance examinations into the Form 4s of the senior secondary schools of their choice. The construction of the JSS began in 1998 and was completed in 2004 with those on South Tarawa the last to be constructed. The rationale in the junior secondary schools was to encourage students to stay at home at that formative period (from 12-14th year) of their lives, giving them the opportunity to learn the local skills in fishing, building and weaving and so on that are fast dying out. Consequently, with the exception of the Latter Day Saints Church, the Church schools had to let go of their junior forms and expanded at upper level at Forms 4-6 and even 7.

Overseas volunteers and the impact on teaching and learning at Taborio

For many years Taborio has benefitted from the educational assistance of the British organisation Voluntary Services Overseas, (VSO). A train of volunteers had followed Sandra Walker, the first of these, on the Tarboro teaching staff that continues until today.

²⁷² Ibid.

The difficulties most encountered with these volunteers vary from person to person. Sometimes unqualified, a few of these volunteers were usually asked to teach English or the field they graduated in. These untrained teachers knew the content of the topic under study and might have no problem teaching it in their mother tongue, but for students who are trying to grasp a foreign concept in a second language, teachers need to be able to explain things in different ways and in more accessible English. This has posed many problems for students' learning especially when students tend to just passively sit and try to make sense of what they are hearing rather than understanding and actively engaging in the learning process.

Today there are more lay teachers in Taborio than religious and expatriate teachers. It is getting more and more difficult to get expatriate trained teachers to come to Kiribati. For command of the English language it would be good to have some English speakers in Taborio. Education today is just not to work in Kiribati so it would be in the best interest of the students that they get used to different nationalities and their different ways. It is all part of education. The Kiribati Teachers' College in Bikenibeu trains teachers for pre-schools to junior secondary schools. Kiribati looks to USP for the training of its secondary teacher training. However, teachers today are not immune to the attractions of higher salaried-occupations in other government departments.

Expatriate teachers who could afford to come for at least two years are the retired ones. As for sisters, there is a world-wide lack of interest by youth in a religious vocation. Kiribati is no longer a mission; it is now a diocese under a local Bishop, Paul Mea, who was consecrated Bishop 10 February, 1979, a few months before Kiribati's independence. The early missionary countries like France, Belgium, Netherlands, Ireland and Australia where the missionaries had come from in the first place, also have very few sisters for work in their own countries.

Cultural Sensitivity and the Education Process

Shyness and fear of being ridiculed by one's peers is a real block in the classroom learning process. Very few students approach the teacher individually and ask for help. Also when they feel that the teacher is not welcoming and ready to give extra assistance then they stop asking for help. However, there have been a few volunteers who did establish a good understanding with the students, got on well with them and assisted them with their studies and with fees, took them for trips to Australia, and sent back supplies of text books.

When teachers were untrained and fresh from college they sometimes found it hard to draw boundaries between themselves as teachers and the students, and led to a break down in discipline. Respect of students towards teachers can mean doing whatever the teachers ask even if it means breaking school rules. It takes a student with some strength of character to tell the teacher in the face that it is against the school rule. To Kiribati students faced with a similar situation, the more polite and culturally acceptable thing to do is to say "yes" and disappear.

The teaching in classrooms is quite different from the transmission of indigenous knowledge in a local family or village setting where the process is a one-to-one, parent to child. Many Taborio staff were experienced teachers and contributed greatly to the welfare and smooth running of the school. Having taught in their own countries they understood that Church schools had rules that could be different to other education institutions and were ready to respect and accept school regulations. Others who have come from very different backgrounds found it hard to accept. Many wished to learn the local language in order to help them better understand the challenges and school rules. They had very good 'teachers' in the students.

The British Voluntary Services Overseas volunteers (VSO's) were replaced in the late 1970s by the Australian Volunteers Abroad (AVA, which later changed to AVI - Australian Volunteer International). In the early 1980s Taborio hosted volunteers from

the US volunteer program the Peace Corps and then PALMS (Pauline Association of Lay Missionaries Society) from Australia and VICS (Volunteer International Christian Services), Canada. Catholic schools also hosted private volunteers, some of whom were friends or relatives of the Australian Sisters or had got to know of the Catholic schools through other teachers who had worked in Kiribati.

Terry Evans - a case study of educational excellence

One of the many good teachers who have supported Taborio in so many ways was a British teacher, Terry Evans. He gave a substantial number of years to the schools and the Catholic education system. He was also outstanding in the professional way he conducted himself in his dealings with students, fellow teachers as well as all those engaged in education. Some of the other teachers' influence could sometimes disturb students in their studies, but he helped students be serious and steady with their school work and kept them in line with school regulations. He treated each and all equally without favouritism or condescension. As a British national Terry had worked as a teacher in quite a number of British colonies. He had worked in Malaysia and the Kiribati Teachers College (KTC) in the 1970s.

In 1984, he returned to Kiribati and came to Taborio to check out the College to see if it needed teachers. He was more than welcome at that time as the school needed experienced teachers. He was known to some of the sisters when he was at KTC. The teacher trainees spoke highly of him. He arrived the next year and stayed to teach for five years before he moved to St. Joseph's College, Tabwiroa, and then St. Louis High School, Teoraereke, South Tarawa. His students always had good marks in the subjects he taught them. He looked after himself and caught his own fish. He had helped quite a number of local people. When he was no longer able to teach he assisted the Catholic Education Office (CEO) in Teoraereke with his wide experience and expertise in the field of education. He ensured the CEO had budget a proper budget for the training and upgrading of teachers for Catholic Secondary schools. He died from a terminal disease in

the UK in September, 2002. His ashes were strewn between Tabwiroa and Teraereke reef where he loved to fish.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the physical foundation of Taborio through considering its founder, buildings, students, teachers, and fees. Those who knew the actual expenses of constructing the early buildings have been long gone. The Christian community is always the church's main resource. This chapter shows that Taborio was constructed as the result of partnerships between the local Catholic community and the driven visionary Bishop Terrienne. In the school, everyone had a critical role to play from the head of the mission to the cooks and fishermen for the school.

Initially the curriculum at Taborio was what the founder envisioned for the girls, to become good Christian mothers with a western education. However, I-Kiribati had their own concepts of what constituted being good mothers. The school environment did not allow for the blending of the two; and that was where the discrepancy lay. The teachers in the school implemented the founder's vision of making Kiribati girls into educated women by adopting the curriculum taught by the GEIC government schools in Kiribati as well as in other colonies in the Pacific. The curriculum in Taborio allowed the girls to emerge from indigenous education in the home to join the colonial workforce, the national workforce of independent Kiribati as well as the workforce in other countries in the world. When education authorities desired high standards in the face of a shortage of local secondary school teachers, the employment of expatriate teachers was a desirable option.

This chapter has explored the impacts of outside educators on teaching and learning in Taborio and reflected on an example on excellence in weaving together Western teaching methods with respect and appreciation for the Kiribati culture and people. The next chapter looks in more detail at the discontinuities between Western and Kiribati ways of

knowing and conceptions of womanhood, and the ways Taborio has attempted to bridge these divides.

Chapter 8

Taborio and the education of Kiribati girls: A quiet revolution

The introduction of secular subjects in Taborio prepared girls for jobs in the cash economy and thereby raised the position of women in Kiribati society by giving them access to similar educational opportunities as were being accessed by women throughout the world at that time. An indigenous philosophy which defined the home as the sole workplace for married women was replaced. Being trained to be good Christian mothers but who also held a western education enabled Kiribati women to be no longer limited to the home, but to rightly take their place in a changing society by joining the national workforce, even as mothers. Women will always be mothers, but with an education at Taborio their possibilities for multiple identities expanded; and whatever they learned was sure to be useful wherever they happened to find themselves: in the home, village, on an island, in a job, or in all of these interwoven roles!

This Chapter examines the increasing possibilities and gender identities of girls who have been educated at IHC under a philosophy and an introduced curriculum that brought changing ideas of belonging and the family. In this process of change Kiribati conceptions of womanhood in general underwent radical transformations. The chapter also examines education and the changing roles of Taborio women and the workplace. What had been the impact of education on gender roles and the lives of women and girls?

Mission Schools and the education of girls before 1955

The formal education of girls had always been solely in the hands of the Missions until after World War Two when the Colonial Government established a few selected co-educational primary schools. The GEIC annual education report for the year 1937-38 had this to say on the section of female education:

*Dr. Mary Blacklock's pamphlet on the "Welfare of Women and Children" was considered in relation to local circumstances, and it was apparent that the application of the principles set forth in the pamphlet must be through Mission education. It was felt that the courses at the principal mission schools for girls might be improved in accordance with the suggestions made, but a difficulty was that many schools were not under direct Government supervision. As the generality of girls was located in the village schools, it was satisfactory that the improvement of these schools had been already attempted and the means for further improvement were under negotiation. The general education of native women, who could afterwards be trained as nurses and midwives, could be ensured at two mission schools, but it was felt that the institution of such a scheme might well await the full development of the scheme for the training of native medical practitioners now in the middle of its progress. The opportunity was taken of pointing out that no subordination of women occurs in social or political life, and that a native woman, by popular consent, travels a very independent path in life.*²⁷³

The colonial government was obviously not averse to the education of girls, and was quite relieved to see the Missions so committed to this course. The held back was the lack of funds and personnel. The 'Welfare of Women and Children' pamphlet was especially compiled for those in the GEIC. It obviously supported the hygiene and child-welfare courses that were offered in the central mission schools. The director of education was voicing a future plan that was still in the pipeline for women.

The only schools that admitted girls before the Second World War were the Missions' Village schools, the Mission Training Institutions, the schools run by the Sisters and the Government primary school for European children on Banaba. But in the 1938-39 education report there were 1,513 girls enrolled in the London Missionary Society village schools and 948 girls in the Sacred Heart Mission. The total population of pupils in schools was 7,082 of whom 3,333 were girls.²⁷⁴ The wives of married students were instructed in "child-welfare", "hygiene" and "homecraft", similar to the Sisters' schools in which 259 girls were enrolled. The curriculum for girls was restricted to home-crafts, religion, literacy and numeracy until 1955. The SHM School for girls in Butaritari had 78 girls on its roll and followed a different syllabus to the other convent schools. English was the medium of instruction for the school for girls of mixed-race parents; and it was

²⁷³ Major Holland, *The Annual Report of the Director of Education for the year 1937-38*; p 6

²⁷⁴ Major Holland, *The Annual Report of the Director of Education for the year 1938-39*. p 5

taught as a subject in the section of the school for Kiribati girls.²⁷⁵ In Tuvalu, 411 girls were attending the LMS village schools.²⁷⁶

Without the efforts of the Missions, women would have been left far behind the men. However, the girls' education was initially 'decidedly vocational',²⁷⁷ as it dealt mainly with home-crafts. After the war, the Sacred Heart Mission School for girls at Butaritari disappeared and there remained only seven convent schools following the same curriculum as before the war. This meant that the girls left schools at sixteen years of age, having achieved proficiency in numeracy reading, writing, handicraft, cooking and needlework; and a solid background in their faith. There was little possibility of pursuing higher education and their future in high levels remained in doubt.

The expansion of possibilities and gender equality: The Education of Girls in Tarawa

In 1949, in North Tarawa, Bishop Terrienne began the first ever, local religious order for Kiribati girls. The establishment of Taborio followed. The first attempt to establish an all female Catholic order in Kiribati was initiated by Bishop Leray in 1897; this attempt was unsuccessful as perhaps it was too early in the Christianization process. Bishop Terrienne's support for women was progressive and systematic, each step building on the next to ensure a structure that was dedicated to and inclusive of women. It was he who invited Father Vincent Dwyer, MSC., from Australia to be the Catholic Education Director in 1958. Father Dwyer was significant in helping the Sisters and Catholic teachers in setting up Island Schools. Soon after the ordination of the first priest from the Colony, Sione Tui Kleis from Tuvalu, Bishop Terrienne left Kiribati to return to France. He died on 4 March, 1994 at the age of 92.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Pers. comm.. with Merea Rabaua Redfern, who was a student at the school in 1938.

²⁷⁶ Major Holland, *The Annual Report of the Director of Education for the year 1938-39*. p 13. Table IIIc.

²⁷⁷ Major Holland, *The Annual Report on Education for the Year 1934*. p 4

²⁷⁸ Pers. comm.. with Father Kerouanton, October 22, 2007

Immaculate Heart College, Taborio

The Catholic Church declared 1954 the Marian Year in preparation for the centenary of the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Bishop Terrienne did not have to look far for a name for the girls' school of his dream. Mary Immaculate, Mother of God, is both mother and model for all Catholic women across generations. It was therefore right and fitting that this new school for Kiribati girls should be named after the Mother of the God who became man. My interviewee, Sister Teneti Bakarereua was emphatic that whenever the Bishop talked to the girls as a school or individually he urged them to become good mothers in the care they would give their children as well as in bringing them up in the faith. Bishop Terrienne maintained that it is in the family that society is formed. In the school boarding life, the girls learnt to clean, to cook and to sew, in line with society's expectations of women's roles in the family. They learnt to use time well, as this was a necessary skill in the home.

In religious instructions the girls were taught what it was to be a Christian, that loving the neighbour meant going beyond members of one's *kaainga* to include all God's children. As Catholic Christians they were now members of God's *kaainga* which is the universal Church. The girls learnt to pray for others. This Christian charity was lived out in boarding life in the school. The spirit in the school was that everyone was a friend and the big girls helped the little ones with the speaking of English as well as in keeping the other school rules. IHC was one big family. The friends that the girls made in Taborio were friends for life.

Students were selected for Immaculate Heart College when parents wrote to ask for their daughter's admission into the College. Candidates were accepted according to the approved number at different times. Because the Sisters were running Islands schools on the islands, many times these Sisters nominated candidates for Taborio or Tabwiroa on the basis of abilities and good behaviour.²⁷⁹ This was the case from the opening of the

²⁷⁹ Pers. comm. with Bwebwenteiti Tebuaka, November 27, 2007

College until the late 1960s when students at Standard 4 sat a common examination in English, Arithmetic, Religion and General Knowledge. Sister Helena Egan was responsible for setting these examinations for the Catholic secondary schools, IHC Taborio and St. Joseph's Tabwiroa. By the 1970s all students at Standard 4s throughout the colony sat the colonial government common entrance examinations into all secondary schools; by then there were KGV and EBS, Bikenibeu, Hiram Bingham High School, Rongorongo, Beru, Seventh Day Adventist, Kauma, Abemama, and Taborio and Tabwiroa. Students had to indicate their preference and the choice of school they wished to enter.

In Taborio, girls were also taught Christian virtues and values, with a specific focus on loving their neighbours beyond the confines of the family members. The girls had to stretch further in changing the notions of kin and relatedness to embrace a Christian notion where everyone, Christian or not, is now family. The school environment was geared towards the practice of Christian living.

Weaving and Kiribati Conceptions of Womanhood

Despite the fact that the core value of female education at Taborio remained preparing women for motherhood and therefore inevitably marriage, teachers from overseas had a significant effect on young women's preparation for marriage in the Kiribati context.²⁸⁰ Admitting girls from the ages of 6-18 years at Taborio eliminated the formative years of socialization in the home as a preparation for marriage. Girls in Taborio were instead introduced to education in preparation for the new economic order and the Australian and Irish Sisters were great Christian educators and role models in this transformation. This was where the departure lay.

²⁸⁰ Quite a number of girls are not in a hurry to get married. They now prefer to complete their education, a tertiary one if possible and even a job. This has been the influence of unmarried girls who have come to work in Catholic schools.

Many overseas teachers did not speak the local language, nor could they weave which is the most important aspect of a young girl's preparation for marriage. The different types of weaving can be seen in the different types of mat and their use. The *wewene* (the fine double mat) is the most precious of all and when given as a gift it signifies the importance of the occasion or the person to whom it is gifted. It was mostly used in wedding ceremonies. There is no wedding without mats and every married woman should have some stored away ready for use in cases of emergency, such as an unannounced arrival of visitors, or a marriage proposal. There were mats as flooring and mats for sleeping. When a woman had none of these she was deemed unprepared for her adult role and therefore could be seen as a lesser woman. From the beginning there was nothing in the curriculum in Taborio that required local skills such as weaving and string-making. This lack illustrated the disconnection between indigenous and secular education systems in the Kiribati context. However, this disconnection has been remedied by the inclusion of Kiribati skills in the curriculum since early 1990s.

Changing Curricula and Conceptions of Women

Bishop Terrienne believed that as educated girls they could help the Church and their country in whatever career they would undertake. The Bishop had a clear vision of the future and he was certainly preparing pathways for women and girls. He dreamt of having educated Nuns as well. Teneti Bakarereua and Alice Tuana were the first two Taborio girls to follow a religious vocation. They left Taborio in 1958 to continue their secondary education in Australia, and they were to join the Local Order of Santa Teretia on their return. In his last communication with them before they joined the novitiate the Bishop advised them to join the Congregation of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.²⁸¹ Today, the Order of Santa Teretia no longer exists. The Sisters joined the Congregation recommended by the Bishop.

²⁸¹ Pers. comm. with Sister Teneti Bakarereua, February 3, 2005

Another one among this first exodus from Taborio was Ianeta Clare Ngalu O'Brien,²⁸² the very first Taborio girl to be employed in the colonial government. Her father was an Inspector of the Colonial Police Force. She was employed as a clerk in-training at the Secretariat, of the Resident Commissioner. Bishop Terrienne and the principal of IHC, were adamant that girls could work in offices. Ianeta was the only girl in the Secretariat of the Resident Commissioner's office, when she first started working in 1958. She was told that women's chances for employment depended on her performance. Every two years the local personnel in the Secretariat and in other government offices sat the efficiency bar test. This was for salary increments. Though she did the same work as the men and she passed her efficiency bar tests for salary increments her salary was always just a little lower than those of the men.²⁸³

Education and the changing roles of women and girls

Taborio brought about a cultural revolution in Kiribati society. Pre-colonization, the place of the girls was in the home and their education was carried out primarily in the home context. The division of labour between the two genders was clearly demarcated. Kiribati is a patriarchal society and the acquisition of land is of core importance. Indigenous education focused attention primarily upon boys, to ensure that they would be equipped with the required skills to nurture, protect and provide for the family, to care for the land and for the reputation of the family.

Education at Taborio was revolutionary because prior to its establishment, young girls were given informal, cultural and social education in their homes which focused on knowledge necessary for preparation for marriage. Their world was confined to the home as homemakers. When schools were first established they were for boys, this fact revealed the dominant position of the boys but this did not in any way diminish the girls' place and significance in the home and society. The men could have been the decision

²⁸² Now Mrs Atanraoi Baiteke.

²⁸³ Pers. comm. with Ianeta Clare Baiteke, April 10, 2008

makers but the women executed the decisions especially in formal and ceremonial gifting in the preparation of food and gifts like mats.

Education received in Taborio was in line with the colonial government's perception of what was appropriate for girls in their interaction with the modern and social-economic environment of the modern world. This was the key to the success of the 'quiet revolution'; women's roles were expanded but the core assumptions about female identity were not challenged, in fact they were in many ways reinforced. Traditional female professions continued to be encouraged at Taborio and women continued to fulfill similar roles to their traditional ones within the new and introduced social and economic order. Women have moved from traditional healers to being nurses; doctors, health officers and dentists; and from transmitters of traditional knowledge and skills, to being teachers. Other jobs that women are engaged in include: secretaries in government departments, clerks, coffee makers and office cleaners. Women, especially on South Tarawa are also private food vendors, dressmakers, drivers, and businesswomen running their bus services and shops. Crucial markers of female identity in the Kiribati context persist. Women's primary role is still seen as a mother, and the 'female' skills of weaving and *bwabwai* cultivation are maintained since they are still learnt in the home.

Taborio Women and the Workplace

In a period of less than ten years since the foundation of the school, Taborio school leavers were successfully employed in the colonial government and commercial companies like the Whole Society in South Tarawa and the British Phosphate Commissioners on Banaba as clerks and typists in the offices. Taborio was also the only secondary school that taught typing and the students sat the Australian Arts Society Typing Examinations in Speed, Accuracy, and Confused manuscript. Ianeta had gone ahead of them to prepare the way and Taborio girls began to take over the jobs that had been consistently occupied by the all male graduates of KGV and the Tuvalu school from the time of their establishment. The few girls who were sent to do their training as nurses in Melbourne subsequently made their homes in Australia. Their vocational training also

enabled them to migrate. This began the ongoing trend of migration for job opportunities, career advancement, and better wages and working conditions that has led to Kiribati losing some of its best to meet the skill shortages of a 'first world' country.

At Taborio there were two types of education, formal and informal. Formal education was carried out in Western style classrooms where students sat and were taught. Informal education at Taborio occurred when individuals learnt things for themselves, through doing and life experience, through living life with their peers. The socio-cultural impacts of Taborio on Kiribati values and philosophies may be considered revolutionary. It changed Kiribati expectations about their children, education and future employment in a way that European customs and values gradually began to be viewed as desirable by Kiribati and Tuvaluan parents.

The very fact that parents chose to send their daughters to a very new venture like Taborio was an obvious response and accommodation of change. In small places like the islands of Kiribati and Tuvalu, there was pressure on parents not to keep their daughters at home when other parents in the community were sending theirs to school in Taborio. In the 1960s to 1970s not attending school meant the parents could not afford the fees (if they could get one of the 50-100 places available). In the 1980s it was felt that parents wanted their daughters to go to school. Getting a job to earn money was the attraction. The trust that parents placed in the missionary Sisters' ability to care for their children was clear; it was not only Catholic parents who sent their daughters but non-Catholics as well.²⁸⁴ In addition, the girls who successfully completed their studies in Taborio were highly likely to join the workforce in the growing commercial centres in the independent nation of Kiribati after leaving the school.

Another revolutionary idea was in the context of time. In the local context a person is master of time, for example, time is 'right' when all people who are needed and expected

²⁸⁴ The number of non-catholic girls who had been admitted at any given time into IHC/CSC/IHC had always been small. There were four girls among the initial intakes of 50 in 1955. In 1963 there were seven, mostly Tuvaluans; and about fifteen in 1969. Since separation of these two island groups in 1975 the numbers have been less than five at any given time.

to attend a meeting have arrived, rather than a fixed hour on the clock. In Taborio the timetable was strictly followed and the girls learnt to follow time as every minute was accounted for and timetabled. The moving of girls from the private and domestic sphere of the home to the public could also be seen as a complete change. The idea of a girls' school in Kiribati was an educational revolution. It transferred the girls from the environment that was dominated by family and culture, to the school and dominated by overseas ideas, curriculum and even staff.

In Kiribati girls who made it through the education system were more interested in getting on with life, further study and getting jobs. Those who showed an interest in a religious vocation needed to complete their schooling and perhaps a tertiary education to furnish them with skill for work in the church. Because this took a number of years to complete very few became teachers and fewer still as secondary school teachers. Consequently, there was/is a lack of qualified Sisters. This accounts for the majority of lay teachers in Catholic schools. The principal of Taborio in 2005-2008 was Teeta Kabiriera, a male ex-student of the school.

The impact of education on gender roles and the lives of women and girls :

Ex-Taborio as working mothers

Taborio did change the nature of the education of girls. From their place in the family as homemakers, Taborio has widened the profile of women to a more challenging level, from just being mothers to now being working mothers. Education also changed the views of parents as to what their daughters should do and could do. Catholic education made students aware of belonging to a wider world. To enable working mothers to carry out their tradition role and also become part of the workforce, grandmothers, cousins and aunties have taken childcare responsibilities for those women whose husbands are also working; otherwise the husbands would look after the children. (This is not common.) A few husbands who do not work because they did not get a good education, do help in looking after the children and the home. Women want to work. They view getting a job

as their due and reward after all their studies. They want to repay their parents for the education they provided. As wives and wage earners they contribute to caring for their parents in their old age. They have the money to provide for their parents' needs. It is a custom to care for parents in their old age. The idea of reciprocity is strong, a favour bestowed is never forgotten, a favour which can be repaid when the time is right, in the case of these women, when they obtain employment.

All family functions that involve contributions, such as in birthdays (especially the 21st, which has become very popular as it marks the coming of age of a girl or boy), weddings and funerals, these working mothers are very active with financial assistance. If mats are needed these could be bought from the Women Club Centres. Working women also will help in the preparation and most importantly are always present at the events. Women maintain this level of community and family involvement within their own families, their husbands' families, their friends from school days as well as new ones in the workforce. Over and above these women are also very active in Church functions: singing and dancing and food preparations for and during big feasts, fund-raising in the parishes as well as other events such as ordination for priests and religious profession for Nuns. Women roles and commitments are complex and multiple, requiring them to negotiate a range of different identities, obligations and expectations.

Some women wish to work as their husbands are seamen and, are often away from home for at least a year before returning only for a short holiday of a few months before returning to the ships. Today it is rare to find an educated wife staying home to look after her children. Getting a job is the norm. Married women today travel to conferences, workshops, and further training. From the 1960s-1980s a young woman with much land and from a good family was desirable as a marriage partner, today one with a good education and a good job has replaced the former. Today at USP or elsewhere there are husbands who have accompanied their wives who are studying. It is not uncommon to find a couple both studying and working and raising a family.

The preserve of the male as the provider for the family has now been partially supplemented and perhaps complemented by the modern educated woman, and Taborio has been instrumental in this. In 2006, there were five married women who were Secretary of a government Ministry and three women MPs in *te Auti ni Maungatabu* (Kiribati House of Parliament). One of these three was the Vice-President. This is a significant achievement for women who had previously no place within the colonial government prior to World War Two.

The education of girls and the consequent changes in the possibilities for new and multiple female identities has transformed Kiribati society and gender relations between men and women, boys and girls. Education for all children regardless of their gender is now so valued in Kiribati culture that Kiribati mothers are choosing to live away from the country in order to ensure that their children access the best possible education. This often means that mothers and fathers are separated as mothers accompany children to nations with more 'developed' education systems such as Fiji while the fathers work at home. There have been a few permanent migrations to Australia and New Zealand with the primary intention of accessing better education for their children.

Conclusion

Formal and informal education at Immaculate Heart College, Taborio greatly enhanced the role of women to fit in with colonial ideas of what would be the new economic and social order of today. The years the girls spent in North Tarawa added significantly to the empowerment of Kiribati women and opened up new ways of thinking about women's roles in society although these were still predicated on roles which are somewhat stereotypically *female*. Formal education empowered women who extended their boundaries by becoming economically viable in the civil service at home and abroad. Although Kiribati women were empowered by the opportunities offered by the educational system and the cultural and ideological changes in emphasis and possibilities for women in society, their expanding roles did not reduce their cultural and traditional roles or societal expectations, and ritual and material responsibilities. I-Kiribati women

are still expected to participate in and uphold all the traditional social and cultural obligations to their kin, and that of their husbands. In addition to these genealogical ties and responsibilities, the new social breadth of women's roles and experiences mean that such responsibilities are also extended to work colleagues, and to members of the religious 'family'. New ideals of belonging were created and encouraged by the colonial education system which also had to be adhered to. This extended concept of the family and of belonging was amalgamated into traditional ways of relating to one another and of honouring relationships to others. By 2007, the English terms "Education" *reirei* and "School" *reirei or kura* had become part of the Kiribati language, and the definition included girls. A revolution had quietly begun without fuss or fanfare. It has been very successful.

To conclude this thesis it must be said that the central contributions to the body of written knowledge on Catholic Education in Kiribati in this thesis are tri-dimensional. Firstly, this thesis contributes new and detailed information about the role of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Sisters in the education of the girls in Taborio thus ensuring the Sisters' rightful place in history. As teachers, spiritual guides and mentors, and mother figures, Sisters were role models for the girls they taught in their faith and their dedication to duties. This thesis reveals stories of Catholic women dedicated to fighting for ongoing equal opportunities for accessing education in Kiribati, women who overlooked the negative attitudes of others, and who met challenges with fortitude, great determination and resourcefulness to ensure that young women and girls were able to learn and compete with the best. They wished to bring the best of their world to those they were evangelizing.

Secondly, this thesis examines the roles and identities that young women educated within Taborio were able to assume as a result of that education, and the subtle changes in societal perceptions of women that access to education initiated in the Kiribati context. A *quiet revolution* had begun through faith, education and the culture of the school. In meeting the challenges presented by their *Christian Mothers* the girls were able to weave together their own Kiribati or Tuvaluan cultures with the education that Taborio had to

offer. This combination has led to a widening of roles and responsibilities for Kiribati and Pacific women. Traditional roles and identities are maintained. Women now also have access to education and to the workplace. This *empowerment* of women is not without its challenges. Pacific women must use all their ingenuity and creativity to successfully navigate this new spectrum of identities.

Finally, this thesis contributes to a growing body of work written by indigenous Pacific women, and from an insider perspective. “Her story” then has been very much part of the history of Taborio and Catholic Education. It is through my intimate position in relation to this knowledge, as both a student and teacher at Taborio, and as a Sister in the congregation of The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and as an indigenous Pacific woman, that the details written within this account have been possible. The *herstory* told within this thesis contributes to a more holistic understanding of Kiribati’s history, rewriting with a female perspective to include long silenced voices, and to ensure that women are seen, heard and included as an invaluable part of the whole history of Catholic education.

Has Catholic Education made a difference? The success or failure of the Catholic experiment in providing national education, parallel to providing a religious education, can be judged quantitatively by the rise, or fall, in enrolments, the number of graduates that have gone on to higher study or who went on to secure employment in the wage economy. The continuing role that Catholic Education plays in Kiribati suggests this has been a success. It is more difficult to establish success or failure qualitatively. The sense of having been a ‘good school’ or ‘well taught’ or having learnt life skills remains anecdotal, and without national surveys can probably not be evaluated. Overall, this thesis suggests that on both criteria, Catholic Education has been both important and significant, and has contributed to the shape of the current nation of Kiribati as it emerged from the decolonization period into independence.

At times the classrooms were impoverished, the teachers poorly trained, English lapsed too easily into Kiribati, and the curriculum was incomplete and inadequate. At other

times girls and boys were well turned out in uniforms, sang and performed beautifully, learnt respect for their elders and adopted good Christian values. The ranking of success or failure is too simplistic to encompass the personal, community and national meaning of what it meant for Kiribati children to have gone to school. They did, and Catholic Education was the provider, and for that reason alone Catholic Education's role is recognized in this thesis as being valuable and significant.

From the time of arrival in 1888 the Sacred Heart Mission (SHM) has offered the children of Kiribati a basic formal education. Since World War Two the primary education curriculum has widened to include subjects such as social studies, health and hygiene, and music. A gradual increase in the teaching of the English language across all schools also occurred. Secondary schools were subsequently developed leading to formal examinations based on a more western oriented curriculum which were set and moderated in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. English was the primary medium of instruction at secondary level. However, the predominant emphasis within schools was still on a practical education for life on the islands. The pace of change in terms of developments in everyday life and standards of living in the islands had not kept pace with the changes attempted and envisioned within the Catholic and colonial education systems.²⁸⁵

Today Catholic secondary schools follow a very formal and examination-oriented curriculum which is centrally regulated by the Government of Kiribati. Secondary education is often motivated by the desire to attain white-collar jobs and continues to be driven by the need for civil service personnel. There are few educational alternatives for youth who are less interested in an academic curriculum. There is very little vocational and technical training available for the majority of children and young people who may have 'dropped-out' of junior or senior secondary schools.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ Pers. comm.. with Sister Margaret Sullivan, OLSH Archivist and Assistant Director of Catholic Education, Teoraereke, Tarawa, June 1, 2008

²⁸⁶ Please, see Appendix 7: Reflections, recommendations and policy directions, pp 151-153

Nonetheless, in spite of the fact that neither Church nor Government school systems has managed to solve all the problems in Kiribati education, the schools in the Catholic tradition have served the people of the islands well, and their memory deserves to be remembered. They have contributed to the development of the people of Kiribati.

Appendix 1

The first Sisters to arrive in Nonouti, Kiribati: August 14th, 1895

Name	Nationality	Born	Years in Kiribati	Died	Place of burial
Sr. M. Rogatienne Grujard	French	1865	30 months	1898	Nonouti
Sr. M. Francis Creighton	Australian	1866	37	1932	Butaritari
Sr. M. Berchmans Pemberton*	English	1867			
Sr. M. Isabelle Maelfeyt	Belgian	1868	31	1926	Butaritari
Sr. M. Victor Organd	French	1868	39	1934	Tarawa
Sr. M. Yves Vaillant	French	1870	55	1950	Marakei
Sr. M. Baptiste Kelhetter	Alsace	1870	46	1941	Abaiang
Sr. M. Irene Onillon	French	1872	63	1958	Tarawa
Sr. M. Julie Klerks	Dutch	1874	17	1912	Butaritari

- returned to Australia in 1900

The second group of Sisters to arrive: Nonuti, Kiribati: February 2nd, 1899

Name	Nationality	Born	Years in Kiribati	Died	Place of Burial
Sr. M. Genevieve Archambault	French	1864	4	1903	Nonouti
Sr. M. Pierre Douillard	French	1871	53	1958	Abaiang
Sr. M. Francoise Jombert*	French	1871			
Sr. M. Apolline Hendriks	Dutch	1873	5	1904	Beru

Sr. M. Valentine Chatellier	French	1875	53	1952	Abemama
Sr. M. Julienne Guitteny	French	1876	60	1959	Tarawa
Sr. M. Clementine Pineau	French	1877	99	1977	Tarawa

*Returned to France in 1907.

The third group of Sisters to arrive: Butaritari, February 9, 1902

Name	Nationality	Born	Years in Kiribati	Died	Place of Burial
Sr. M. Claude Gouron	French	1867	4 months	1902	Butaritari
Sr. M. Hermelande Orhon	French	1875	66	1967	Tarawa
Sr. M. Emillienne Potier	French	1975	18	1920	Tarawa
Sr. M. Arsene Sente	Belgian	1877	57	1959	Tarawa
Sr. M. Albertine De Montbert	French	1879	7	1909	Tabiteuea
Sr. M. Placid Tanner	Australian	1879	2 months	1902	Butaritari

Sr. M. Yvonne Guillaud arrived in 1909 and died in 1944 at Teaoraereke, Tarawa. With her was Sr. M. Leonie Roverch who seemed to have returned to France. In 1928 Sisters Jeanne d'Arch Tessier, Simone Vaillon and Eugenie Desfongeres arrived in Butaritari. Sr. Tessier spent 17 years in Kiribati and died in 1945 in North Tarawa. The other two returned to France after having spent twenty years in Kiribati. Sister Mary Juliana Leneutre arrived in 1939 and died in Abemama in 1942. The last of the French Sisters was Sister Mary Theresia Martin who arrived in 1940 and left in 1958 to go to the Cameroons in Africa.

There was one Australian Sister in the first group, and one in the third group. Three more Sisters arrived in Kiribati in 1906, another two in 1915 and another one in 1923. As the number of European Sisters decreased more Australian Sisters replaced them, especially when Kiribati came under the Australian Province.

Appendix 2

Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony: Government Education Budget and Allocations -1944-1954

Year	£A	s.	d.
1944 : Total No allocations of this given amount.	5,378	12	7 ²⁸⁷
1945 : Total	4,723	13	4 ²⁸⁸
: Allocations - Administration	686	15	7
KGV: Abemama	638	13	0
Tuvalu School	267	10	2
Education of Colony students in Fiji	1,954	7	0
Grants-in-aid to Mission schools & establishments	778	15	0
Miscellaneous: land rents, etc.	36	5	0
Salaries	361	7	7
1946 : Total	5,747	3	4 ²⁸⁹
1950 : Total	7,804	7	11 ²⁹⁰
Administrative costs	1,271	8	1
Expended on government schools	4,833	9	10
Grants-in-aid to Missions schools	1,700	-	-
Students in Fiji expenses excluded.			
1952 : Total	12,330	8	1
Grants-in-aid to Missions schools	1,700		
1953 : Total	14,691	12	10
Grants-in-aid to Missions schools	1,700	-	-
1954 : Total	17,742	14	5 ²⁹¹
Grants-in-aid to Missions schools	1,700	-	-

²⁸⁷ Hard, *Report on Education for the Year 1946*, p 2

²⁸⁸ Ibid. p 2

²⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 2

²⁹⁰ Education Department., *Report on Education for the Year 1950*, pp 4 and 10

²⁹¹ Education Department, *Report for the Year 1954*. p.13. Annexure 1

Appendix 3

Resources in the Vernacular and English

Text books and teaching resources available at the library of the University of the South Pacific, Suva.

Some text books prepared at Rongorongo, Beru, for the teaching of Reading, English, Geography and History and *Te Wareboki ae bou*²⁹² a (new reader). The new reader²⁹³ has illustrations. First the pupils are introduced to the sounds of letters, then the sounds in words, e.g. I with a picture of a fish beside it and the word fish next to it., these are followed by two lettered words for the teaching of sounds: e.g. ng, a picture and the word ‘ngao’. This is followed by Bb with the word ‘bon’ followed by a three-lettered sentence: Bon te ro + (picture). Other words are used for children to make up sentences of their own.

The English Primer 1 for the Gilbertese,²⁹⁴ provides instruction for the use of the book beginning with the pronunciation of words that are commonly used by children. The pupils are taught how to read each word, write it and its meaning in the Kiribati language. The next step is to teach the meaning of the word in a sentence. Visual aids are used for asking questions encouraging students to respond. The teacher I have three books. Prepositions are taught by placing items in different places and then ask: where is the book? The book is under the table. Lessons continue to include the use of: this, that, I have, I see, and so on. The next step is to teach pupils how to pronounce: f, th, d, s and c which are not in the Kiribati alphabet.

*Te Wareboki n Tiaokurebe ae Rongorongoia kain aonaba*²⁹⁵ can be used for reading. A map of the world should be displayed to indicate where the places mentioned in the

²⁹² These were printed in the 1920s and reprinted in the 1930s. They were very good and well prepared.

²⁹³ E. M. Pateman, 1955, *Te Wareboki ae bou ibukia ataei n taian reirei i Kiriati*, Rongorongo, Beru, London Mission Press.

²⁹⁴ Nei Misi Itiman, 1923, *English Primer 1 for the Gilbertese*, LMS Press, Rongorongo, Beru, Gilbert Islands: 1st Edition in 1923, 2000 copies were printed; 2nd Edition in 1928, 2000 copies printed.

²⁹⁵ E. M. Pateman, 1929, *Te Wareboki n Tiaokurebe ae rongorongoia kain aonaba*, LMS Press,

reading are located. When used for Geography lessons, pupils are taught about the islands in the Pacific, their names, location, size, town, mountains, rivers and crops; for Pacific people, the type of houses they live and the kind of food they eat. Asian and European countries are taught in the same way.

Homes in many Lands,²⁹⁶ is about houses in which people in the world live. The information for the differences is well provided, climate, landforms and therefore the availability of various building materials. Beginning with the houses I-Kiribati live in, how they are built and the local material used with a picture of a Kiribati house, the nineteen other types of houses from other countries are dealt with in the same way. The countries are indicated on the displayed wall map. The second half of the book is about children of the world. For example, Ngaire of New Zealand, there is a picture of the girl, Ngaire, beside the map of New Zealand, with a description of her appearance, the clothes she wears and why she wears such clothes, where her ancestors have come from, the place where she lives, landscape, the work she does at home, the arrival of Europeans in New Zealand and how the Maoris have lost some of their lands. The rest of the eighteen countries are taught in the same way.

Rongorongo, Beru, Gilbert Islands: June 1,000 copies; April 1932 2,000 and another 500 copies in 1937 for Forms 1-3. Adapted from "People of the World" (ed) A. Hon., B.A. by permission of the Society for Promoting Christian knowledge, London.

²⁹⁵ *Umaia ni maeka kain aonaba*, Beru, Gilbert Islands, LMS Press, 1937. A Geography book about houses in which people in the world live for primary schools' upper classes.

Appendix 4

Berness Hall

Another building on the development front was the Berness Hall. There were in Taborio at that time a VICS couple, Dell and Agnes Reider, and a PALMS volunteer, Frances Hodgson. AusAID funded the extension to the dining room to include a new kitchen. This was completed in 1992 when Frances Hodgson was principal of the school and opened on August 1 and Sister Margaret Sullivan was Director of Catholic Education. It was dedicated to the memory of the late Sister Mary Berness Claxton, who had been Director of Catholic Education from 1971-77; and again from 1984 until her untimely death on March 20, 1990. The last three days of her life were spent in Taborio looking into the needs of staff, students and the workmen on the buildings. She arrived back in Teaoraereke on March 20 and went to the airport to meet a local teacher coming in from Butaritari. Unknown to her, the flight had been cancelled and she met her death on the return trip from the airport as the car in which she was travelling skidded on the slippery curve on the road at Tangintebu. On the front wall of the Berness Hall is a plaque in memory of Sister Berness. This was unveiled by Sister Aileen Crowe, first principal of IHC., Taborio.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁷ Catholic Education Office files, Teaoraereke, Tarawa.

Appendix 5

The first admissions at IHC Taborio²⁹⁸

NUMBER	NAME	HOME ISLAND
1	Teneti Bakarereua	Abemama
2	Baranika (Minateban) Teweia	Tarawa
3	Agnes Kabuati	Tarawa
4	Tusi Neli	Vaitupu
5	Marina Albert Muller	Butaritari
6	Ruta (Tiroa) Tawanga	Tabiteuea North
7	Monica (Tabania) Nabe	Tarawa
8	Teretia (Kabuterenga) Timon	Onotoa
9	Luluta Neli	Vaitupu
10	Agnes Willie Reiher	Tarawa
11	Philomena (Albang) Jim Kum Kee	Tarawa
12	Eugenia William Reiher	Abemama
13	Veronica (Rannabere) Kauongo	Tarawa
14	Christina (Tere) Teri Fay	Tarawa
15	Terorati Tinganga	Tarawa
16	Meere Jim Kum Kee	Tarawa
17	Itabera (Matu) Teaoteai	Tabiteuea North
18	Maria Teretia (Tebuto) Ibeatu	Tarawa
19	Tieri Baniti Hugill	Butaritari
20	Emily Jim Kum Kee	Tarawa
21	Lavinia Simon Edwards	Washington
22	Felicia (Temoantei) Ibeatu	Tarawa
23	Emeri Leslie	Tarawa
24	Mita Adolph Reiher	Tarawa
25	Kaweinga Kararaua	Tarawa
26	Eritabeta (Turinangko) Tinou	Tarawa
27	Bwebwerina Tawita	Tarawa
28	Tetiria (Kakinako) Tekiera	Tarawa
29	Arawataake Kabwebwenbeia	Tarawa
30	Kateitaake Tekai	Tarawa
31	Anete Tiotake	Abaiang
32	Anna (Tutokan) Nikuata	Abaiang
33	Maria (Juliana) Toauru	Tarawa
34	Nora Fanoa Pine	Nui
35	Atunatetoka Nakareke	Tarawa
36	Tetake Barekiau	Tarawa
37	Oirin Yee-Ting	Tarawa

²⁹⁸ IHC., Taborio School Register, North Tarawa, Kiribati.

38	Ianeta Clare Ngalu O'Brien	Funafuti
39	Tekoba Takirua	Tabiteuea North
40	Tioningare Kaibobo	Butaritari
41	Tebwerei Bwebwenimarawa	Abaiang
42	Lucy Edward	Marakei
43	Grace Dave Murdoch	Abemama
44	Lily Leslie Copeland	Tarawa
45	Bwenatu Teleke Kofe	Funafuti
46	Terie Kamatie	Marakei
47	Temarika Tiotake	Marakei
48	Tiebane Teacki	Maiana
49	Julia William Reiher	Abemama

Appendix 6

Singing Classes, Musical Productions and Sports Days

Singing was an important part of the identity of Taborio from its beginning. The girls learnt to sing from their heads and not with their open voices. In the early days the most popular of the plays were “Teddy Bears’ Picnic” and “Gypsy Gay”. For special Options different groups of girls played the mouth organ, and various other types of recorders while still others did embroidery work.

The Annual Concert became a very important fixture in the life of the students of IHC in the 1960s. Sister Veronica Hollis put on the drama “Abu Hassan pays his debts”. Jane Resture was Abu and Teekua Rataro was his wife.²⁹⁹ Jane played the supposedly dead Abu with great dramatic effect that made the staff recognize the importance of drama in the teaching and improving of English. From then on the teachers always tried to have drama as part of the curriculum. They realized too that it helped very much in the articulation of English and in the giving of confidence to face an audience and speak in English. Establishing a high standard of English was consistent priority.³⁰⁰

Sports Days were elaborate days for the girls, their parents and relative as well as the friends of the school. Marching and especially Figure Marching was also an important part of the girls’ exercise and the presenting of a precision display on Sports Days. Those ex-students who attended the sports day without fail were usually engaged as umpires for the various games played. First there was the ‘March in’ where the girls presented themselves in their teams: Carmel, Issoudun, Fatima and Lourdes. This was followed by the Figure March where the girls formed wheels and long waves and all kinds of intricacies with the use of hoops decorated with the teams’ colours: green, gold, blue and red.³⁰¹ After the folk dancing was the play-off of the finals in basket ball, volley-ball and tennis. The last consisted of ball games, flat races and relay races. In all school activities,

²⁹⁹ Pers. comm. with Sr. Veronica Hollis, May, 2005

³⁰⁰ Pers. comm. with Sister Veronica Hollis, May, 2005

³⁰¹ Pers. comm. with Sisters Veronica Hollis and Nora Hanrahan, May, 2005

the four teams were most important and the holding of the winning shield for a year was a great honour.³⁰²

In their work of teaching and supervising all aspects of school life of the girls, the Sisters were assisted by the monitors and the team prefects. For sports there were a Sports captain and vice-sports captain. Each form also had a form prefect for this purpose. To this end too, the election of prefects and form prefects was of major importance in the school. The students were to elect into positions those students who were responsible and were not afraid of speaking the truth.

The girls enjoyed sports and concert days as their families came to see them and they usually brought food. It is customary for parents when visiting their children staying with relations or friends to bring food and this carried over in the case of a school function. They brought food prepared to last a few days for their daughter(s) and their friends. Those girls whose parents lived on the outer islands would not be among the parents able to visit and therefore the extra food they brought was shared amongst those further from home thus including them in the celebrations and creating new connections. Sharing a meal together strengthened kinship ties and relationships.

³⁰² Ibid.

Appendix 7

Reflections, recommendations and policy directions

Kiribati parents consider the present education system valuable because of the opportunities it can present for a minority of students; all parents of course hope that this minority will include their children. Many parents do not have a high regard for practical skills, perhaps due to the absence and de-valuation of such forms of knowledge in the formal education curriculum to date. The present exam oriented Education system in Kiribati is not catering for the majority of students who often do not go beyond or complete senior secondary education. Churches have been groundbreaking in the provision of education for all, and in particular in ensuring educational opportunities for Kiribati girls.

Kiribati and its people are however in need of a more vocationally oriented curriculum in order to meet technological, social and economic changes. The education system can also lead to the knowledge and qualifications needed for *skilled* migration overseas. Vocational and technical education also meets changing needs within the home environment and culture. Changes in everyday lifestyles include access to electricity; the construction of concrete buildings and houses, the use of modern machinery for carpentry and modern equipment for the maintenance of water supplies, and technical skills for maintaining vehicles. These are all newly established technical needs that have to be met. Many modern tools are donated by the international community through development aid projects, the short term nature of these means that I-Kiribati people are often not taught about the maintenance of such equipment and also that they feel no attachment to such objects as they have not worked for them.

Further areas for discussion and debate in Kiribati include what role churches might play in the next necessary wave of educational innovation, towards technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and the contextualization of the curriculum. Should churches take primary responsibility in providing additional opportunities for vocational

education in order to prepare the majority of students for life in Kiribati and elsewhere? Building on the existing educational structure this thesis suggests that with government assistance several industrial arts (TVET) centres should be established within Junior Secondary Schools across Kiribati, thus allowing a wide range of students to access technical and vocational training.

The outcomes³⁰³ of the Education Summit³⁰⁴ involving CEDAK³⁰⁵ and the Ministry of Education of February held 2008 are still in an embryonic state. Kiribati can usefully borrow policies and ideas from its Pacific neighbours. However, the nation also needs to be wary of uncritical adoption of ideas from elsewhere, a phenomenon which has dominated educational development up to the present day. Kiribati needs to create its own curriculum and systems of education which are broad enough to include all children and able to respond to rapidly changing social and cultural conditions. There is also a great need to encourage students in the fields of Literature and Social Studies as both areas can contribute to developing I-Kiribati ways of knowing and being and provide resources upon which a rich and contextualized curriculum can be further developed.³⁰⁶

In addition to the revision of the colonially inherited curriculum is the pressing need for trained teachers. All senior secondary schools suffer from this deficit. The need for trained teachers at all levels cannot be underestimated. Those who teach must receive a good rounded training, academically, spiritually and culturally, physically and emotionally. Trained teachers can then, through their work and as examples through their own lives, can help students to be grounded within their own culture, nurture caring attitudes, and produce students who pursue honesty, and who respect their environments and communities.

³⁰³ Recommendations reached at the Education Summit have to go to *Ana Auti n Maungatabu Kiribati* for approval before the Ministry of Education can act on them.

³⁰⁴ A three-day review of the Education system in Kiribati initiated and executed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Over 300 representatives from the different ministries and groups in the country were invited to help review the education system.

³⁰⁵ Church Directors of Education Association in Kiribati.

³⁰⁶ Pers. comm. with Brother Donald Teixeira, FSM., Teoraereke, Tarawa, May 20, 2008. Tui Nicole Clery, June 4, 2008, Suva, Fiji.

In response to the needs identified within this thesis Catholic educators and education systems should work in partnership with the Kiribati government, to invest in the *training and development* of dedicated *local* teachers to meet the dire needs for trained personnel within Catholic schools.

Catholic Education needs to develop a system that is based on the current needs of students. It should therefore engage in discussion, reflection and consultation with parents, teachers, communities and administrators, in order to make the changes that are necessary. Having School Boards or Board of Governors for junior and senior secondary schools is another way of involving parents and the wider community in education thus enriching the educational experience through the knowledge and involvement of the Kiribati community.

In the process of implementing these changes there should be a conscious adherence to the idea of providing Kiribati students with an academic education integrated with life skills which is grounded in the social, cultural and spiritual values of Kiribati which will help to prepare the young for the many possible future life ways open to them in the increasingly connected and globalized Pacific regions.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁷ Pers. comm. with Brother Donald Teixeira, FMS., April 4, 2008, Sacred Heart High School Bikenibeu, Tarawa; Tui Nicola Clery, June 4, 2008, Suva, Fiji.

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