



Semisi Moala with daughters Ana (left) and Jane (right), in Tonga

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre, Australia.

Moala, Semisi (1900–c.1981)

MILTON HOOK

Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian*, *Gospel Revivalist* the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

Semisi Moala was a Pioneer Tongan school principal and minister.

Early Life

Semisi (James) Moala was born April 23, 1900¹ at Fakakakai village on the island of Ha'ano, Tonga. His parents were Viliami and Tae (Fala'ula) Moala.² As a lad he came seeking education in 1909 at the elementary school conducted by Harold Piper at Faleloa on Fotua Island. The school had reached capacity but Piper squeezed him in.³ Semisi proved to be a good student, passing through the grades and learning to be helpful on the mission station. He showed promise as one with leadership ability and was sincerely interested in the spiritual activities on the station. In 1918 he was baptized with two others by Ethelbert Thorpe.⁴ He married Luceane Kaufusi of Neiafu, Vava'u Island, on November 9, 1921, at Neiafu, a Free Church of Tonga minister performing the ceremony.⁵ Luceane already had an infant lad, Henele, whose father had abandoned them. Semisi adopted Henele and seven more children were subsequently born into their family: Seini (Jane), Taufu, Alicia, Ana, Eleni (Helen), Tupou and Kaleti.⁶

Church Career

The 1933 *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* is the first official acknowledgment that Semisi was in church employment.⁷ However, one missionary claimed Semisi joined the mission team in 1925.⁸ His claim approximates a report of Semisi assisting a European lay member in evangelism on Vava'u Island in 1927.⁹ In 1930 Semisi is spoken of as "our worker" pioneering at his home village of Fakakakai.¹⁰ There, in 1931, he rejoiced to witness the baptism of his only sister, he being instrumental in her conversion from the Free Church of Tonga.¹¹

Semisi continued to evangelize and teach baptismal classes in the Ha'apai group of islands. In 1939 he and his growing family were located at Lotofoa, a short distance from where he had attended the Faleloa school thirty years earlier.¹² Later, in 1943, Semisi was transferred to the Tongan headquarters church at Nuku'alofa where the church committee meetings record him as the chairman.¹³ By 1944 Semisi was recognized as the leading Tongan evangelist and was called on to conduct the funeral of prominent church member and periodical translator, Sione Taliauli, on Vava'u Island.¹⁴

Piper was invited to be a guest at the August 1947 Tongan Annual Council held at Neiafu, Vava'u, the reason being that his former pupil, Semisi, was to be ordained at the gathering together with a fellow missionary, John Kamea. It was an historic occasion because the two men were the first Tongans to be ordained to the Seventh-day Adventist ministry. At the time Semisi's adopted son, Henele Moala, was headmaster at Beulah College and one of his daughters was a teacher in the mission school at Nuku'alofa.¹⁵

The new expatriate directors of the Tongan Mission depended on Semisi as their right-hand man and, when needed, he translated from English to Tongan during worship services.¹⁶ Semisi had the honor of being chosen to attend the 1950 Australasian Division Session as one of only two national delegates from the Pacific Islands.

"In a voice broken by deep emotion," the report noted, Semisi "expressed thanks ... for the love and self-sacrifice that led the brethren and sisters in Australia to give of their means and their sons and daughters that some might be gathered from the islands of the sea."¹⁷

Semisi remained on the Tongan Mission ministerial team until 1975,¹⁸ serving briefly as Sabbath School and Missionary Volunteer Secretary (1953)¹⁹ and as an executive committee member (1954).²⁰ He gave fifty years or more of sterling service to the mission. He was nurturing the church members on a volunteer basis at Vaini, Tongatapu, when Luseane passed away in 1973. He passed away peacefully about 1981.²¹

SOURCES

Cernik, J[ohn]. "Golden Jubilee, Tonga, Friendly Isles." *Australasian Record*, November 28, 1949.

Hadfield, B[ernard] E. "A Pillar of the Church Falls in Tonga." *Australasian Record*, February 28, 1944.

Piper, H[arold] E. "Visiting Tonga." *Australasian Record*, September 8, 1947.

Nuku'alofa Church Record Book. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, Cooranbong, New South Wales. Box: 151. Document: "Nuku'alofa Church Record Book."

"Semisi Moala." FamilySearch.org Intellectual Reserve 2020. Retrieved from

[https://www.familysearch.org/search/family-](https://www.familysearch.org/search/family-trees/results?offset=0&q.birthLikeDate.from=1895&q.birthLikeDate.to=1900&q.birthLikePlace=tonga&q.givenName=semisi)

[trees/results?offset=0&q.birthLikeDate.from=1895&q.birthLikeDate.to=1900&q.birthLikePlace=tonga&q.givenName=semisi](https://www.familysearch.org/search/family-trees/results?offset=0&q.birthLikeDate.from=1895&q.birthLikeDate.to=1900&q.birthLikePlace=tonga&q.givenName=semisi)

.
Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1933-1976.

[Stewart, Andrew G.], "Another Visit to the Friendly Isles." *Australasian Record*, June 7, 1948.

Tolhurst, H[ubert] L. "Up and Down Again in the Tongan Group." *Australasian Record*, July 28, 1930.

Tolhurst, H[ubert] L. "Up and Down the Tongan Group." *Australasian Record*, October 10, 1927.

Tolhurst, H[ubert] L. "Uplift in Tonga." *Australasian Record*, November 20, 1939.

Tolhurst, H[ubert] L. "Visiting in the Tongan Group." *Australasian Record*, August 10, 1931.

Tolhurst, Pearl. "Church and School Work, Haapai, Tonga." *Australasian Record*, May 20, 1918.

"Tongan A.I.U.C. Session Delegate." *Australasian Record*, December 4, 1950.

NOTES

1. Oral genealogies are prevalent in Tongan society and exact birth, marriage and death dates in addition to the names of nineteenth century ancestors contain some variants. This article carries what is believed to be the weight of evidence.
2. "Semisi Moala," FamilySearch.org, Intellectual Reserve, 2020, accessed September 10, 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/search/family-trees/results?offset=0&q.birthLikeDate.from1895&q.birthLikeDate.to=1900&q.birthLikePlace=tonga&q.givenName=semisi&q.surname=moala>.
3. H[arold] E. Piper, "Visiting Tonga," *Australasian Record*, September 8, 1947, 4-5, 8.
4. Pearl Tolhurst, "Church and School Work, Haapai, Tonga," *Australasian Record*, May 20, 1918.
5. "Semisi Moala," FamilySearch.org, Intellectual Reserve, 2020, accessed September 10, 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/search/family-trees/results?offset=0&q.birthLikeDate.from1895&q.birthLikeDate.to=1900&q.birthLikePlace=tonga&q.givenName=semisi&q.surname=moala>.
6. Daniel Moala, interview by Milton Hook, Hornsby Heights, New South Wales, October 11, 2020.
7. "Tongan Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1933), 74.
8. J[ohn] Cernik, "Golden Jubilee, Tonga, Friendly Islands," *Australasian Record*, November 28, 1949, 6.
9. H[ubert] L. Tolhurst, "Up and Down the Tongan Group," *Australasian Record*, October 10, 1927, 4.
10. H[ubert] L. Tolhurst, "Up North Again in the Tongan Field," *Australasian Record*, July 28, 1930, 3.
11. H[ubert] L. Tolhurst, "Visiting in the Tongan Group," *Australasian Record*, August 10, 1931, 4.
12. H[ubert] L. Tolhurst, "Uplift in Tonga," *Australasian Record*, November 20, 1939, 8.
13. Nuku'alofa Church Record Book, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, Cooranbong, New South Wales. Box:151. Document: "Nuku'alofa Church Record Book."
14. B[ernard] E. Hadfield, "A Pillar of the Church Falls in Tonga," *Australasian Record*, February 28, 1944, 5.
15. H[arold] E. Piper, "Visiting Tonga," *Australasian Record*, September 8, 1947, 4-5.
16. {Andrew G. Stewart}, "Another Visit to the Friendly Isles," *Australasian Record*, June 7, 1948, 2.
17. "Tongan A.I.U.C. Session Delegate," *Australasian Record*, December 4, 1950, 8.
18. "Tongan Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976), 121.

19. "Tongan Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1954), 88.
20. "Tongan Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1955), 70.
21. "Semisi Moala," FamilySearch.org, Intellectual Reserve, 2020, accessed September 10, 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/search/family-trees/results?offset=0&q.birthLikeDate.from1895&q.birthLikeDate.to=1900&q.birthLikePlace=tonga&q.givenName=semisi&q.surname=moala>

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000