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Two early Nafe (Kwamera) language catechisms from Tanna (Vanuatu)

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Abstract

Bible translation was the primary project of Protestant missions to Oceania, but missionaries' preliminary texts typically included catechisms that they used to expound Christian dogma and as schoolroom material. I analyze and compare two 19th century Nafe (Kwamera)[1] language catechisms. The London Missionary Society published the first (*Naresian Te Nankerian Fei Iehova*) in Apia in 1845. Presbyterian missionary William Watt printed several editions of a second catechism (*Naresian*) on his handpress, the first edition at his Kwamera mission station in 1876. I read these catechisms to assess missionary choices in how to express Christian concepts and personages in Nafe language (noting a few early Bislama items). Second, I compare the catechisms' orthography, lexemes, and clarity of syntax, speculating about 19th century reader (or auditor) reception. The two evince Nafe dialectical differences between Kwamera (where Watt was initially based) and Port Resolution.

Abstract in Bislama

Olgeta protestant misinari we oli kam wok long Pasifik oli wantem tanem Baebol i go long ol lokol lanwis, be bifo oli transletem Baebol oli raetem sam katekisim blo yusum lo niufala skul blong olgeta. Mi lukluk gud lo tu olfala katekisim lo Nafe (o Kwamera) lanwis. Sam misi blong London Misionary Society oli printim fes wan (*Nasesian Te Nankerian Fei Iehova*) lo 1845 lo Apia. Afta, wan Presbiterian misi, William Watt, hem tu hemi printim wan katekisim (*Naresien*) lo Kwamera, stesen blo hem, lo 1876. Mi ridim tufala katekisim blo skelem haonao ol misi blo bifo oli tanem Kristin tingting mo pipol i go lo Nafe lanwis. Mo mi lukluk lo niu alfabet, wod, mo ful toktok we misi ya oli yusum blo tingbaot spos ol man Tanna blo bifo oli harem save o nogat. Mo tufala katekisim ya i soemaot sam difrens bitwin Nafe lanwis blo Kwamera mo Nafe lanwis lo Port Resolution.

Abstract in Nafe (Kwamera)

Ianpen nah misi me satui huvarei Ipare henosari mhoseri Baebol ia nagkiarien Nafe mene, mata iraha hakupwɨn mharai naresien sai nakur nah heno skul ianpen nah. Iakavsini naresian kɨru mua misi me tui hanarai. Misi nepwun savai London Missionary Society heno sarakupwɨn (*Naresian Te Nankerian Fei Iehova*) fwe Apia ia 1845. Kurira, misi William Watt reno naresian sarokɨru ia Kwamera, stesen sarakupwɨn savani, ia 1876. Iakavsini naresien kɨru naha mua takata pui mua misi me hafani irapw nurukurɨnien mene neremama sai nakarasia ia

[1] The linguonym on Tanna is pronounced [nɨfe] (what) or [nininɨfe] (said what) although this today is often represented by the easier-to-type Nafe. Presbyterian missionaries and later scholars called the language Kwamera after their south Tanna mission site, a name that partly survives as ISO 639-3 TNK and as Glottolog Kwam1252.

nagkiariien Nafe. Iakata amasan nɨkukua mene naraiien mene nagkiariien sai naresian mi naha mua sata sas ua nakur asori iraha haregi asas ira ua rekam. Nagkiariien ia nakwai naresien kɨru naha irauopa ouihi. Nafe sai Kwamera rapwah namwhenien ia Nafe fwe Irupov ienpen nah.

Keywords

Nafe (Kwamera), Tanna, Christian catechisms, language material creation, vernacular literacy

1 Tanna

Bible translation was a primary project of Protestant missions to Oceania, but missionaries' preliminary texts typically also included catechisms that they used to expound Christian dogma and as schoolroom material. Although catechisms are "a central instrument in educating and communicating Christian belief and dogma," Flüchter (2017, p. 17) notes that it is "astonishing that catechisms were rather neglected in studies both of confessional identity and global evangelization." I analyze and compare two 19th century Nafe (Kwamera) language catechisms from southeast Tanna (Figure 1). Tanna, in what was then the southern New Hebrides, attracted significant attention from sandalwooders, whalers, traders, and then missionaries since James Cook mapped the island in 1774. About 3500 people today speak Nafe along Tanna's southeastern coast, from Iasur volcano and Port Resolution, south to Kwamera, and then up north around to Green Point. Increasing numbers of Nafe speakers have moved to settlements around Port Vila, Vanuatu's capital town.

Both catechisms take the classic catechistic form of questions and answers. The London Missionary Society (LMS) published the first, *Naresian Te Nankerian Fei Iehova* (Question(s) in/of Language to/about Jehovah), in Apia in 1845 (London Missionary Society, 1845a). Missionaries George Turner and Henry Nisbet lasted nearly seven months at Port Resolution from 30 June 1842 to 23 January 1843 when Islanders angered by epidemic illnesses chased them away. This catechism was the first printed text in any Vanuatu language. Australian book collector John Ferguson (1918, p. 17) credited Turner with authoring the catechism, but his colleague Nisbet also had retreated to Samoa and he well may have been involved.

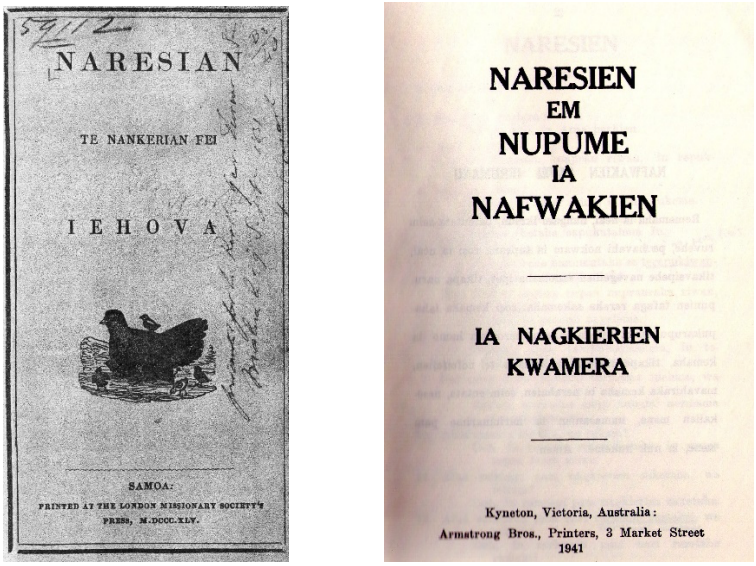

Figure 1. Two catechisms

Presbyterian missionary William Watt printed a second Nafe catechism, *Nagkirien Kamares,* (Language One-asks), on a handpress at his south Tanna Kwamera mission station in 1876 (Ferguson, 1918). This was seven years after Watt arrived on Tanna, and a year after the Glasgow Foundry Boys, his sponsor, shipped him the press. He was assisted by island converts and by his wife Agnes who had notable linguistic skills (Figure 2). The Glasgow Foundry Boys, in 1908 printed a new edition of the catechism at their Religious Society's Press (Ferguson 1918, pp. 23–24) with a better Nafe title *Naresien* (Question(s)). Watt, in 1908, reprinted this on his own press at Port Resolution. His catechism, combined with other Nafe material including hymns, the Apostle's Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's and other sample prayers, and short biographies of Biblical characters, was subsequently republished several times by the Presbyterian Mission. I draw on a 1941 edition of *Naresien* printed by the Armstrong Press in Australia (Presbyterian Mission, 1941) (Figure 1).

Figure 2. Agnes (1846-1894) and William Watt (1843-1926)

I read these catechisms to assess missionary decisions in how to express Christian concepts and personages in Nafe (noting a few early Bislama items). Second, I compare the catechisms' orthography, lexemes, and clarity of syntax, speculating about 19th century reader (or auditor) reception. Watt's catechism, given his longer tenure on Tanna, still reads well; much of Turner and Nisbet's, although in some places murky, is comprehensible. The two catechisms evince several dialectical differences between Kwamera (where Watt was initially based) and Port Resolution.

2 Missionaries

Ambitious London Missionary Society evangelist John Williams, who had worked in the Society and Cook Islands, and then in Samoa since 1830, planned new Christian outreach into the southern New Hebrides (Robson, 2009). In late 1839, Williams along with his secretary James Harris and a dozen Samoan teachers sailed to the archipelago on the mission ship *Camden.* He dropped Samoan teachers on Futuna and Tanna and headed next to Dillons Bay on Erromango. Sandalwood traders had murdered a young man there a few weeks before and in revenge Islanders clubbed and killed Williams and Harris when they went ashore on 20 November 1839.

Williams, who had published a popular book about his mission endeavors, was celebrated in British Christian circles. The LMS widely publicized his martyrdom to boost operations in the Pacific. George Turner and Henry Nisbet (both from the Relief Church, a Scottish Presbyterian spinoff) volunteered to continue William's mission on Tanna. They were young (23 years old), and recently married. Transiting Sydney, they arrived in Samoa in August 1841 where they practiced their evangelistic skills and picked up a smattering of Samoan. They next arrived at Port Resolution on east Tanna on 30 June 1842 to join Samoan teachers Mose, Vaiofaga, and Apolo, already there. Williams had left Mose at Port Resolution in 1839 along with Lalolagi and Salamea. Lalolagi returned to Samoa in 1841, before Turner and Nisbet arrived; Salamea died in 1843 (Latai, 2016, p. 299). Vaiofaga joined Mose in 1840, and Apolo in 1841, arriving on subsequent visits of LMS' ship *Camden* which continued to transport

additional teachers, some with their wives, to southern Vanuatu (Latai 2016). Turner and Nisbet, their own newly acquired wives, and the remnant teachers all escaped Tanna in January 1842, chased away by anti-Christian adversaries along with onetime supporters who were outraged by a wave of epidemics that swept the island.

Turner, after Tanna, remained involved with the Samoa mission, returning there several times and publishing Samoan Bible translations and several accounts of his Pacific endeavors, including *Nineteen Years in Polynesia: Missionary Life, Travels, and Researches in the Islands of the Pacific* (1861), and *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before* (1884). Both books featured a revised version of a Tanna report to the LMS that Turner began writing the month before he fled Port Resolution in January 1843 (Turner, 1842-43). He died in London in 1891. Nisbet, who kept a diary while on Tanna (Nisbet, 1842-43), also continued missionary work on Samoa where he died in 1876.

The LMS, in 1845, brought replacement Samoan and Cook Island teachers back to Port Resolution, and John Geddie's Presbyterian mission on Aneityum sent teachers to south Tanna in 1854. Presbyterian missionaries John Paton, John Matheson, Samuel Johnston and others arrived in 1858, although they too had all died or decamped by 1862. Replacement Presbyterian missionary William Watt with his wife Agnes established a mission station near Kwamera (near Tanna's southern point) in 1869, eventually moving north to Port Resolution in 1891 after his colleague Thomas Neilson had left that station (Figure 3, Tanna map).

Like Nisbet and Turner, the Watts were young Scots Presbyterians, both from Glasgow (Lindstrom, 2013). Ordained in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, William was 26 and Agnes 23. More successful than the earlier LMS missionaries at Port Resolution, the Watts survived many years on Tanna. Agnes died there in 1894 and was buried at Port Resolution. William, remarried and, with two young children, left the island to retire to Melbourne in 1910. The Eglington Street branch of the Glasgow Foundry Boys Religious Society adopted Watt's mission as a charity, and in 1873 the Boys shipped a hand printing press to Tanna (Flexner, 2016, p. 98). Along with the 1876 catechism, Watt used this to print Nafe translations of Bible chapters, school texts, and small books about Jesus' miracles. He would subsequently arrange for publication in Scotland of a New Testament Nafe translation in 1890 (Murray, 1888, p. 150; Lindstrom, 2022).

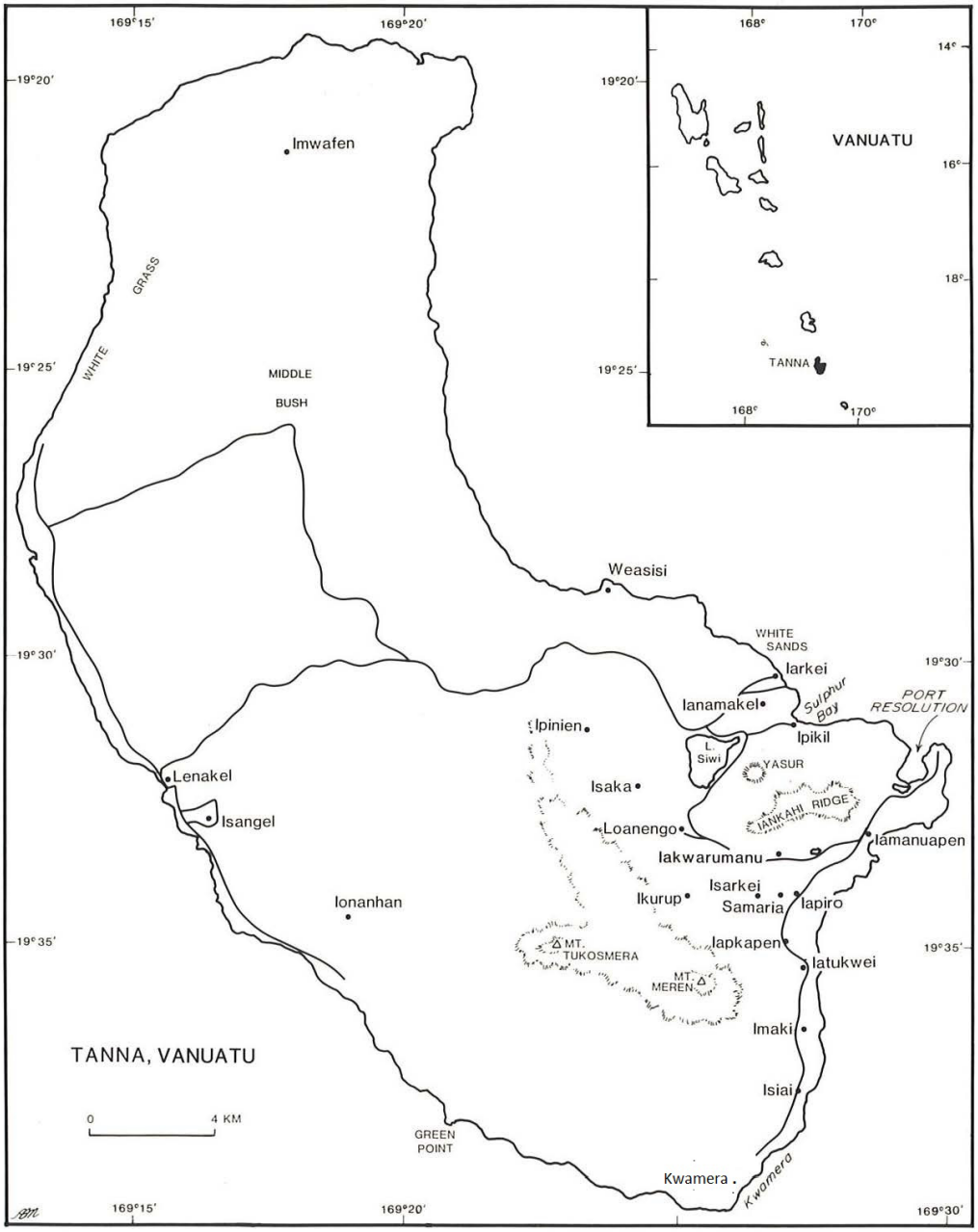

Figure 3. Tanna

3 Catechisms

"Catechism" derives from a Greek verb denoting oral teaching. The earliest known Christian catechistic text is the *didaché* which dates to CE 65-80. After Gutenberg, the term came to label printed Christian educational manuals used to teach children and to instruct converts. Martin Luther's 1529 Small Catechism, composed for children, popularized a question/answer format, with material sorted by topic (e.g., the commandments, the Lord's Prayer, confessions and creeds, and so on) (Haemig 2014). Parents or masters posed the questions, and children or novices provided doctrinally correct answers.

The Protestant missionary project in the Pacific aimed to convert the heathen and eventually to produce Bible translations in island languages. George Turner wrote that this was "the great work on which our hearts were set" (1861, p. 167). Bible translation necessitated

first learning that language, creating an orthography, establishing schools that taught literacy alongside Christian doctrine, and producing educational Christian texts leading up to the eventual publication of translations of the Testaments. Catechisms were a useful tool in the conversion project as they disseminated Christian doctrine and advanced literacy. Their question/answer format also worked with the illiterate. People could memorize how correctly to answer the set questions that missionaries and teachers read out to them.

Catechisms were among the first texts that Turner and Nisbet, and then the Watts, composed in Nafe language. My guess is that both drew on very popular catechisms that the Congregationalist theologian Isaac Watts had compiled in the early 18th century. Watts published several catechisms, including *The First Set of Catechisms: Or, The Religion for Little Children Under Seven or Eight Years of Age*, and a second set for children between seven and twelve. He also produced (or his name was lent to) *A Historical Catechism for Children and Youth* which featured Biblical characters. Earlier LMS missionaries elsewhere had written and taught simplified translations of Watts' catechisms, including in Tamil, Tahitian, and Italian (Lovett, 1899, pp. 161–162; London Missionary Society 1826, p. 71, 103). Both Nafe catechisms seem modeled on Watts' productions for children, although Turner and Nisbet and Watt might have borrowed from some mediate text that I have yet to locate.

The two catechisms, as had Martin Luther's and Isaac Watts' earlier works, consisted of questions and answers organized by subject. The missionaries titled both catechisms *Naresian*, or 'question(s)', a nominalized form of the Nafe verb 'ask': *n-ares-ien*, (NMLZ-ask-NMLZ). (Neither title included the optional plural marker *me*). Turner and Nisbet labeled their catechism *Naresian Te Nankerian Fei Iehova, 'Question(s) to/for Language from [about] Jehovah'*, and Watt more simply called his *Naresian.* Alongside Turner and Nisbet's catechism, the LMS press in Samoa also in 1845 published a second small book, probably to serve as a school primer. This was *Naukukua Kamauseni Nankeriani ia Tana Asori*, 'book it shows/explains language of great Tanna' (London Missionary Society, 1845b). This features examples of one, two, three, and four syllable words; various expressions; explanations of Jehovah, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Devil, Hell, ancestor spirits; Arabic and Latin numbers one through five (with neighbor island Aniwa examples through ten); and a few hymns.

Ferguson's bibliography (1918) lists two other early Nafe catechisms that he did not collect, and that I do not consider here. Watt described these in a note he sent to the mission publication *New Hebrides Magazine* (1903, p. 22). John Geddie, the first Presbyterian missionary who arrived on Aneityum in 1848, printed a Nafe catechism on his handpress in 1855. Watt supposed that Geddie had prepared this for teachers whom he had posted to southern Tanna. This may have been a reprint of the LMS 1845 production. Watt also noted an earlier 1851 catechism that he presumed had been printed on Rarotonga, at the mission school established there by John Williams. He wrote that "this was the work exclusively of natives of that island. I have only a single leaf of it, but I confess my inability to make heads of tails of it" (1903, p. 8). This featured 24 questions and answers, and block prints of a horse, cow, sailing boat, goat, and a few pigs, labeled *puka* (pig), *kurimatau* (bullock, early Bislama), *Tata! Tata!* (father!), and *nepuni puka matenga hatai* (some pigs [?] they see[?]).

Kapao, one of the replacement teachers the LMS brought to Port Resolution in 1842, was from the Cook Islands. He fled Port Resolution along with Nisbet and Turner in 1843. The LMS left three more replacement Cook Islanders on Tanna in 1845, including Upukomanu who lasted there until 1850 when he returned home. Crowl (2008, p. 116) guessed that he helped compile the catechism that Roratongan missionary William Gill printed there on a handpress. The page I have is indeed grammatically and lexically obscure. Whoever prepared this catechism mistitled or misprinted it *Maresian*, not *Naresian,* and used 'l' for Nafe [r],

although Nafe has only one liquid phoneme /r/ (the flap or tap [ɾ]). The translators also favored a CV structure. Question 14, for example, reads

Nangesi ika lumuru I nia maha I kumuesane I seimu lamo penapena uri?

In contemporary Nafe, this would be:

Nag-si [nahag si]	*ik-am-uru*	*ia*	*niemaha*	*ia Kwumwesin*	*sai-m*
What [name-who]	2SG-cont-live	in/of	anger	of God	poss-2SG
r-am-o	*apenapen*		*nari?*		
3SG-DUR-do	haphazardly/wrongly		thing?		

The answer begins: 'What (or why) are you living in your god's anger he (or it) is acting wrongly?' or perhaps 'What behavior makes God angry with you?'[2]

A colleague once showed this to a Tanna elder who guessed it might be composed in a language once spoken on Iankahi, the ridge directly west of Port Resolution that was depopulated by the end of the 19th century. However, people there must have spoken Nafe as the LMS teachers who assisted Nisbet and Turner in 1842 used their Nafe skills to communicate with villagers living there. The catechism's irregular grammar, rather, reflected Rarotongan and Samoan teachers' rudimentary grasp of Nafe, as Watt surmised.

4 Missionary Linguistic Competence

William and Agnes spoke Nafe well. They had worked many years on Tanna: Agnes until she died in 1894. and William until he retired in 1910. Watt's catechism, today, is easily understood by Nafe speakers. I confirmed this with island friends in the early 1980s while working on a Nafe dictionary. Watt might have tweaked the 1908 edition to catch earlier errors. One typo did slip by in the Iesu Kristo (Jesus Christ) section, question 6. Watt extended the verb *ahatata* (lean against) to mean 'believe', but misspelled this in the answer to the question with *mamahatata* misprinted as *mamahahata.*

Rekam, nakur hamokeikei Iesu, mamahahata [sic] ira, In terameri iraha ia neai…
'No, those who love Jesus, believing in him, He will put them in the sky…'

The earlier 1845 LMS catechism is still readable, although some of its phrases are opaque. How did Nisbet and Turner manage to produce this given their short tenure on the island? Watt presumed, as he could understand the text, that LMS Samoan and Rarotongan teachers who had survived for several years at Port Resolution must have drafted this:

> The earliest Catechism was printed in 1845 at Samoa, and was probably the work of either Dr. Turner or Dr. Nisbet, assisted by such Samoans as had lived on Tanna. I can hardly imagine it possible that either of these brethren unaided could have prepared the book, as they were only some nine [sic] months on the island altogether, and the book shows an acquaintance with the language which I would think it was scarcely possible to attain in

[2] Given linguistic errors, inconsistent orthography, and other issues in the textual examples extracted from the catechisms, particularly Turner and Nisbet's, I provide interlineal glosses only when these are notably informative.

> that short time. Another thing that makes me think that the Samoan teachers had a hand in it, is the frequent use of the letter 'l' instead of 'r,' and the putting of an 'e' in such a word as 'narema.' There are, however, few words that a native would not be able to understand (1903, p. 22).

Agnes took a more jaundiced view of the LMS text:

> Any one who knows the Tannese language, or indeed any of the New Hebrides languages, will agree with me, that it is but lame mission work one can do during the first twelve months. Besides, the Eastern teachers never learned to speak Tannese properly. Even after fourteen years chattering away in this tongue I have difficulty in making out the few sheets of *Samoan-Tannese* which I have seen (1896, p. 218).

The likely Samoan-Tannese catechists would have included Mose, who had survived at Port Resolution since John Williams left him there in 1839, Vaiafaga and Faleese who arrived in 1840, and perhaps Lalolagi although he had returned home in Samoa in 1841. Turner, however, criticized his Polynesian teachers' grasp of Nafe, complaining that Vaiofaga was the only one who could render them any service, although "his knowledge of the language was very imperfect" (1842-43 report, p. 26). Mose, however, was able to translate into Nafe a short sermon that Nisbet had first delivered in Samoan on 3 July, during the missionaries' first week on Tanna (Nisbet diary, 4 July 1842). The resident teachers and their families all returned to Samoa in January 1843 with Turner, Nisbet and their wives, all of whom fled Tanna on the *Highlander*. When Turner and his fellow LMS missionaries later translated the Bible into Samoan, he affirmed that they had relied on "native pundits" as well as a missionary translation committee (1861, p. 168), and he probably followed that practice for the Nafe catechism.

Turner, reporting from Tanna, grumbled about the island's linguistic complexity, writing: "Mr. Nisbet and I hoped that we might eventually be able to fix upon some one of the dialects of the island, and make it the basis of our translations and oral instructions. It was, however, a grievous affair to find out that, on going to a place four miles from our door, we needed an interpreter to communicate with the people" (1861, p. 84). He did, though, admit that Tanna's languages "are copious, euphonic, and have some of the niceties of language: a triplial as well as a dual in the pronouns, for instance" (1861, p. 84).

During Turner and Nisbet's first months at Port Resolution they were kept busy negotiating with their hosts, building a house, bartering for food, treating increasing numbers of invalids including themselves, and welcoming trading ships, sandalwooders, whalers and other visitors that arrived almost weekly at the Port. They also had to deal with their Samoan "servants" (as they called them), some of whom proved obstreperous and adulterous. The teachers must have been stressed, particularly those who had persevered at the port since 1839 and 1840. The missionaries and their wives displaced the suffering Polynesians from one of their houses until their own "cottage" was ready, and this no doubt increased bad feelings. Mose, for one, insisted that his wife return to Samoa as she was impossibly quarrelsome. Nisbet attributed this to Mose's own bad temper, and the missionaries suspended the pair from church privileges. Fuataiese, too, made trouble, beating his wife Doreta on several occasions (Nisbet diary, 17 September; 12 October). Local boys also complained to the missionaries that Samoan teachers occasionally beat them as well (Nisbet diary, 12 October).

Worse, the frequent foreign traffic calling at Port Resolution brought to Tanna several serious epidemics which caused many deaths. Turner and Nisbet found themselves caught between their host villages on the eastern side of Port Resolution and, eventually, everyone else living to the west and south. Ambushes, attacks, and intervillage hostility constantly

increased until Turner and Nisbet, their wives, and their teachers fled Port Resolution in January 1843.

The missionaries devoted much of their first three months on Tanna to house building, helped by their LMS colleague Thomas Heath who assisted in setting up the station before returning to Samoa on *Camden*'s next visit in October 1842 (Figure 4). Turner in *Nineteen Years*, however, recalled cheerfully that:

> By the end of September we were snugly settled in our new cottage, and able to devote our time more exclusively to the work upon which our hearts were bent. We soon picked up the language, so as to conduct religious services without an interpreter, arranged the orthography of the dialect, and got our little printing-press set up (1861, p. 11).

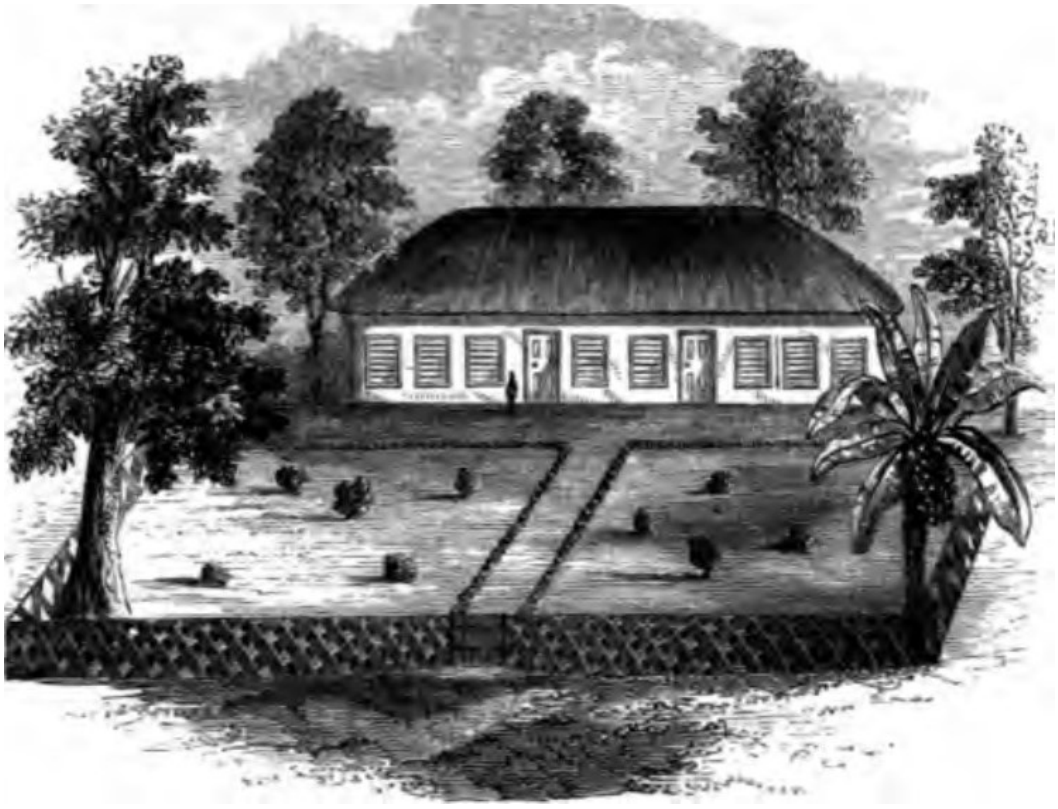

Figure 4. Turner and Nisbet's house at Port Resolution, 1842

Three months are a short time to learn an unwritten language, especially when the missionaries were busy with many other projects. Nisbet's diaries record that they continued to rely on their teachers to mediate interactions with Islanders. Their main relationships were with their teachers, not local people. The two missionaries' passing familiarity with Samoan tinged their comprehension of Nafe. Nisbet regularly used the Samoan term *marae* (not *malae*) for the kava-drinking and dance clearings that dot Tanna's landscape, only shifting to Nafe *imwar~~i~~m* after late August. He scattered other Samoan words in his diary to describe life on Tanna, including *lotu* (religion), *fono* (meeting), *ifi* (Tahitian chestnut tree), *fefe* (fear), *totogi* (salary), *togiola* (redeem), and *aitu* (spirit). And the Samoan teachers weren't alone in substituting 'l' for Nafe [r]. Turner, in his report, listed 18 Nafe words, misrepresenting *ramasan* (good, 3SG-good) as laumasan, and *reraha* (bad, 3SG-bad) as lelaha.

Nisbet (diary, 5 September) wrote that he and Turner had started work on a Nafe "spelling book" so, by their second month on Tanna, they had begun to collect words and to devise an orthography. The two, it seems, argued over work on this book, meant for use in some future school. Nisbet wrote that "I left off writing any thing for the spelling book—as Mr. T. seemed

offended at my doing so—without something very formally being settled about it" (Nisbet diary, Sept 10). Turner, perhaps, insisted that both agree on lexical forms. On 12 October, Nisbet diarized that they had "commenced spelling book—with Turner and I doing jointly." He noted that Turner was able to speak some Nafe during a Sunday service on 11 September, which also featured a Nafe hymn. By 20 December, they knew enough to translate the first four commandments which they printed on their handpress, and by the end of 1842 they had "set up first 4 pages of Turner's spelling book" and printed these on 6 January 1843 (Nisbet diary, 31 December, 6 January). Nisbet, it seems, had surrendered work on this to Turner.

By October, Nisbet started to drop a few Nafe words into his diary, including *tain* (*tai-* poss.3SG). *Tai-* denotes a reciprocal gift, or a debt payment, and the missionaries were pleased that their gift-giving had strengthened exchange relationships with their Port Resolution hosts. Nisbet wrote, "This is the best in this people's character—Reciprocation of kindness" (diary, 12 October). His next Nafe borrowing, however, was *nahak*. This denotes 'scrap, dirt, mote' and, by extension, 'sorcery'. Those island men who controlled the power stones that could sicken or kill others soon became the missionaries' *bêtes noires*. Nisbet also learned the verb *ouasi* (strike, kill), although wrote this as 'nasi' (diary, 3 December). He knew several less alarming words, including nitumue (*nɨtumwi*, Pacific lychee, BISL: nantao), *kisup* 'shell trumpet' (although people blew this when threatened by enemies), and aremha (*ieremha*), 'ancestor spirit' (diary, 17 December). Nisbet, also on that day, recorded a linguistically accurate first-fruit yam prayer: "Tata senam nuuk ikane" or *Tata sanam nuk ikani* (Father, your (edible) yam you eat). Turner, in his LMS report, mixed fewer Nafe words, although he knew the term 'nari Tonga' (*nari itoga,* foreign thing), and he cited the word *kauas* (stone throwing club), writing about an old woman who prevented a man from using one to bash his head (report, pp. 9, 29). He also recorded that one of their hosts, Kwanuan, said that "he would 'ramuki misi'—that he would cast us off if we did not let them have fire arms" (report, p. 38); *~~ɨ~~mi~~ɨ~~ki* means 'hate, dislike'.

Years later, when Turner was 66 years old, he included "Tanna" among "One Hundred and Thirty-two Words in Fifty-Nine Polynesian Dialects," an appendix to *Samoa* (1884, pp. 354–375). I don't know where he acquired this larger lexicon. Perhaps he with Nisbet had collected additional items for the Nafe spelling book they had commenced, or perhaps Watt and subsequent missionaries at SE Tanna may have contributed. These lexemes are adequate, although Turner persisted in use of 'l' in 'laumasan', 'lelaha', and several other items, e.g. 'ilaha' (*iraha,* they.PL) and 'lea' (*reia,* fowl).

5 Readability

Tannese converts would sometimes have had a difficult time grasping the LMS catechism's message given Nisbet and Turner's rudimentary grasp of Nafe. Catechisms served as texts in church and mission school venues, however, and these could have provided opportunities for teachers to clarify baffling language. Watt's catechism remained readable to village friends when I learned Nafe in 1978, although it does feature an orthography that he devised and used in his other publications, including his Nafe New Testament (Lindstrom, 2022). The handpress that the Glasgow Foundry Boys shipped to Tanna included standard English type, and Watt found symbols for Nafe's range of vowels /a, e, i, ɨ, o, u/ (substituting one of the other vowel types to represent the mid-central ɨ), and Nafe's consonants /f, g, h, k, m, n, p, r, s, t, v, w[3]/. Watt's 'g' denoted the velar nasal [ŋ], and 'hm' or 'hn' represented Nafe's voiceless nasals.

[3] I follow Lynch (1978:12) to consider [w] an allophone of /u/; In Nafe, too, this becomes [w] before another vowel.

He also included ‘l’, ‘d’, ‘j’, and ‘b’ in transliterated English words (e.g., *angelo, bred, Judia*). Watt, for some reason, used ‘b’ in several Nafe word (e.g., *beriberi* (both, altogether); s*aba* (different) which better are *periperi* and *sapwa*:

Napen Kurira 5. Nakur hamara ia tuprana mesite napen kurira tuafo ira?
‘Those who are living on earth until the after days, what will make/happen to them?’
Iraha tuapukemhmahma, mata nupranraha tero saba reti, iraha miraha nakur huvahmaraka tuarer berberi ia namri Atua.
‘They will not die, but their bodies will be different, they with those already dead will stand up together in the eyes of Atua.’

Turner and Nisbet’s catechism typesetters sometimes incorrectly split words, as in question IX.11:

Te nape nriti nari lelaha liuan ia naukureian fei nāp ua rakako?
‘What time will bad things disappear in the fire situation, or not?’

This should be *Te napen riti nari… .* The LMS translators, as did Watt, used ‘g’ for [ŋ], and translators caught some of Nafe’s voiceless nasals [m̥ n̥], and also [r̥], marking these as ‘mh’ and ‘rh’. They, phonemically correct, did not include voiced [d], even in transliterated words (*Tiapolo, Atamu*), and only used ‘b’ in one obscure term (see below). The Apia printers, however, employed ‘c’ for the voiceless velar stop in a few words (*crirum* ‘five’; *safuace* ‘we.PL-pray’), while otherwise used ‘k’. They introduced ‘sh’ in a few transcriptions (e.g., *Tui in maushete Eva*, Long ago, he [the devil] tempted Eve), which should be *avsiete* (lie, fool, tease). Previous experience in printing Samoan translations probably influenced orthographic choice, including the appearance of a macron over ‘a’ (ā) in a few words scattered throughout the catechism.

Tannese who were schooled to read Nafe could have understood most of the words in both these catechisms. The LMS catechism, however, is sometimes lexically and grammatically irregular. The translators had grasped the nominalization circumfix *n…ien* which derives ‘language’ from the verb *agkiari* (speak), and also *naresien* (question) from the verb *ares* (ask a question), titling the catechism *Naresian Te Nankerian….* In one question (I6), however, they represented ‘speak’ as *mankeari* (*m-ankeari,* DUR-speak) and not *ankeri* as in the catechism’s title. The prepositions in this title (*Te Nankerian)* are unusual. *Te*, for one, is a dative meaning ‘to’ or ‘for’. A contemporary phrase would be *naresien ia nagkiariien* (questions in language). One today also might expect the possessive marker *sei* (or s*a-i*), instead of less common *fei*, in *fei Iehova.* The translators, as Agnes Watt complained, used “Samoan-Tannese” ‘l’ in many words for Nafe’s [r], including ‘litia’ (*r-iti-a,* 1SG-one-only) in the catechism’s first question about Iehova:

1. *Iehova keva?*
‘How many Jehovahs?’
Iehova in litia.
‘Iehova he is only one.’

Some of Turner and Nisbet's transcriptions are flawed, as is "rarike" for *r-araki* (throw), in the answer to question II.4. Si ramo lelaha ilaha 'Who is doing badness, they':

Ilaha hamuki nankerian fei Iehova, in roniamaha tukwe, in rarike ilaha ia narup ia nap repuk mene.

'They hate Jehovah's word, he is angry because of this, he throws them below into the many fires', or perhaps 'throws many of them into the fire'

Other translations are opaque, as in question I11: Si rupu i Iehova? *Rupu* (or 3SG-upu) today means 'he/it develops, swells up' or 'he/it clots, congeals'. In the question's answer, the verb *akupwin* appears variously, as "makupun" and "makupan". The question probably asked is 'What preceded Jehovah?' as implied by the provided answer:

Liuan makupun in, in makupan anan, naremama pam kurira.

'Nothing went before him, he really is first, every person follows.'

Verbal morphology, here, is also deficient. The echo subject marker 'm' is misused, insofar as the two subjects (*riuan* 'nothing' and *in* 'he' (god)) differ, although the translators' 'm' here could be the durative marker *am*. A contemporary translation would read:

R-iuan	*r-akupwin*	*in,*	*in*	*r-akupwin*	*anan,*	*n-ermama*
3SG-nothing	3SG-preceed	him,	he	3SG-preceed	very,	PL-person

pam kurira.
all after.

'Nothing precede him, He was very much first, everyone is behind.'

The section's second question is also irregular:

1. *Iehova savani rahua?*

'Jehovah his what/why?'

The answer reads *Nupuran liuan, in nanumuna* (or 'his body is nothing, he is only his spirit'). A standard structure would read:

Neprai Iehova rafo [or rahua]?

'What is Jehovah's body like?'

Nepran riuan. Nanumun aga.

'His body is nothing. His spirit only.'

I won't offer additional examples of the LMS catechism's grammatical deficiencies although they continue through the text. Watt, with his better knowledge of Nafe, along with his own island converts would have recognized most of the previous catechism's intended meanings despite its grammatical defects.

6 Questions and Answers

Watt's catechism, given his longer tenure on Tanna and his better grasp of Nafe, more clearly presented the basics of Christian doctrine. Both catechisms, however, included similar questions about Iehova/Atua (God), Iesu (Jesus), and Nanumun Ekenan/Nanumun Ikinan (Holy Spirit), about Adam and Eve and their original sin when the devil led them to eat *kuankuai nei* (fruit of a tree, Turner and Nisbet IV.5), about Jesus's birth, death, and his eventual return to judge and deliver resurrected people to heaven or hell. Turner, Nisbet, and Watt all found the Nafe term *tai-,* which connotes a reciprocal or return gift, useful to describe salvation in Christ, as in Watt's third question about Jesus:

1. *Iesu Kristo ro nafe tereviaraka ketaha?*

'Jesus Christ does what to save [t-r-evi-raka, FUT-3SG-pull-PFV] us?'

In reiwaiupehe ia tupranei, mavahi nupran, memha, tai nakur kamahatata ira.

'He descended-towards to earth, taking a body, died, payment for those who believe in him.'

Both catechisms listed their questions and answers in named sections. Turner and Nisbet divided theirs into ten topical sections, some seemingly overlapping, with 4-13 questions each for a total of 80 (Table 1; translations are literal).

Table 1. Turner and Nisbet's catechism sections

SECTION	TITLE	# Q
I	Naresian Iehova (Question Jehovah)	11
II	Naresian Nanumun Iehova In Ramo (Question His Spirit Jehovah He Is Making [-am-, durative verbal aspect])	4
III	Naresian Nari Pam Iehova In Reno (Question Everything Jehovah Made/Did)	9
IV	Naresian Nari Ruera Tafaga Lelaha (Question Thing Grew/Caused Bad Behavior)	7
V	Naresian Tafaga Lelaha (Question Bad Behavior)	6
VI	Naresian Tain Numuruian (Question Its Repayment for Life)	9
VII	Naresian Iesu (Question Jesus)	6
VIII	Naresian Iesu, In Ruamha, Rarer, Ruauita ia Neai (Question Jesus, He Died, Stood up, Ascended to Sky)	13
IX	Naresian, Iesu In Terufe Umui ia Narup (Question, Jesus he Will Come Again to Below)	12
X	Naresian Nari In Mo Masan Naremama (Question Thing It Makes Good People)	6

Watt similarly divided his catechism into topical sections. His had just seven, with clearer titles, and 9-24 questions and associated answers for a total of 105 (Table 2).

Table 2. Watt's catechism sections

SECTION TITLE	#Q
Atua (God)	15
Adam Mene Iv. Mene Nakune Tafaga Reraha (Adam and Eve. And Origin of Bad Behavior)	21
Iesu Kristo (Jesus Christ)	16
Nunumun Ikinan (Holy Spirit)	8
Tafaga Amasan (Good Behavior)	24
Nakalasia (Church)	12
Nepen Kurira (Time After [Afterlife])	9

7 Christian Spirits and Concepts

Turner, Nisbet, and Watt had to find words for Christian spirits and concepts that would not distort the gospel (Table 3). They sometimes discovered a Nafe term they could work with. More often, they imported a word from elsewhere or transliterated an English term. Flüchter (2017, p. 32) notes that catechistic translators elsewhere employed both these strategies, and occasionally invented new words in the target language (see also Joby 2024). Watt's longer and more precise catechism contains more of these borrowings and transliterations. Nisbet and Turner learned *ieremha,* the Nafe word for ancestral spirit. The month before they fled the island Nisbet wrote: "They seem to worship the departed chiefs under the general name of aremha. We were in want of a good name to express the Deity. Perhaps this may do" (Nisbet diary, 24 Dec 1842). Turner, however, later reported their second thoughts: "The word aremha which was supposed to be the general name for diety, signifies nothing more than "dead man": so that when they speak of praying to aremha they merely mean that they pray to the spirits of their forefathers. Every district has its different aremha" (Turner report, p. 88).

Kwumwesin, a polysemous word that denotes infinitude, the spirits, but also unusual events, warts, moles, or tubercles on the body or on kava root, was another possibility to name the deity. Turner defined this as 'eternal' in his report, writing that no one at Port Resolution knew how long they had been at war or why it had started; that "all agree in saying that it has been "kumuesan" that is eternal" (Turner report, p. 5). Turner and Nisbet's catechism did borrow the word to describe the immortal soul:

> III.6. *Nanumun teremha ua leakum?*
> 'Will its spirit die, or not?'
> *Leakum. Nupuran teremha, nanumun ramru kumuesan*.
> 'No. It's body will die, spirit lives forever.'

Watt likewise used *kwumwesin* to describe his eternal God/Atua:

> Atua 3. *Nafe na Atua?*
> 'What is God?'

In Kumesen, nupran riwan, In repukosihma ketaha.
'He is eternal/spirit, his body is nothing. He won't kill/assault us.'

Historian Ron Adams (1984, pp. 61–64), writing about the first century of culture contact on Tanna, noted the probable confusion that these Christian borrowings would produce. Nehrbass (2012), who translated the Bible into Nafe's neighboring Naha language for the Summer Institute of Linguistics, also has explored persistent cross-cultural misunderstandings of Christian dogma and persons. Turner and Nisbet resorted to the transliterated 'Iehova' to name God, and 'Iesu' for Jesus, but they borrowed *Nanumun Ekenan* (sacred/tapu spirit/ghost) for the Holy Spirit, and they described God as "the big chief/ruler" (*arumanu asori*). In addition to Iehova and Iesu, both catechisms transliterated Biblical names Adam, Eve, and the Devil. Watt also included *Idin*, *Kalali, Olivet,* and *tana Judia.* Catechistic "use of words like *aremha, nununun, and Nanumun ekenan* would have strengthened the natural tendency on the part of the Tannese to evaluate Christianity in terms of their customary magico-religious framework" (Adams 1984, p. 62), particularly so in the case of the tapu spirit (1984, p. 61). The Tannese, like other Islanders, overlap concepts of the sacred and the forbidden. Watt's catechism grasped this in using the term *ikinan* both for Holy Spirit and for prohibited behavior, as in questions in his section concerning good behavior, *Tafaga Amasan:*

11. *Nari ikinan nakresian, wa rekam?*
'Is stealing forbidden, or not?'

Turner and Nisbet's catechistic questions about Iehova probably puzzled their island audience. These avowed that there is only one Iehova who has no body, only spirit. He is a good spirit without bad behavior, makes all good things, and loves us all. He sees and hears all and knows our hearts/innards. He lives in the sky with his son and the Holy Spirit, but also is everywhere. He has no father. The one trinitarian question must also have confused:

I.9: *Irahar kahar ua rakako?*
'They three are three, or not?'
Leakum—ina litia. Iehova ga ina litia.
'No—he is one. Jehovah is only one.'

Watt's catechism retained Iesu Kristo for Jesus, and also Nanumun Ikinan for the Holy Ghost, but he used Atua for the trinitarian god which comprised Iehova, Iesu Kristo, and Nanumun Ikinan. This name no doubt reflected the enduring influence of Samoan and Rarotongan teachers at Port Resolution since 1839. Watt's text, unlike Turner and Nisbet's, followed Christian practice and uppercased the pronoun 'In' (he, she, it) when this referred to Atua or Iesu.

Table 3. Christian names and terms in the two catechisms

Person/Concept	Turner/Nisbet	Watt
God	Iehova	Atua
Jesus	Iesu	Iesu Kristo
Holy Spirit	Nanumun Ekenan (spirit-3SG.POSS tapu/sacred)	Nanumun Ikinan
Angel(s		Nagelo(me)
Devil	Tiapolo	Diabolo
Apostle(s)		Napostelo(me)
Heaven	Neai (sky)	Neai
Hell	Nap (fire)	Nap asori (fire big)
Sacred/Forbidden	Ekenan	Ikinan
Cross	Nei rukuao (tree 3SG-intersect)	Nei kamerkwauwi (tree crossed)
Afterlife		Napen kurira (time after)
Adam and Eve	Atamu, Eva	Adam, Iv
Eden		Iden
Church/Congregation		Nakalasia
Believe in	Ahatata (lean against)	Ahatata
Station/situation/life	Naukureian	Naraien
Sin (v)	O rikau (do/make 3SG-crooked)	O tafaga reraha
Sin (n)	Tafaga lelaha	Tafaga reraha
Last Supper		Navegenien ikinan (meal tapu/sacred)
Baptism		Nabaptisoien

Alongside Nafe terms *nanumun, ikinan, napen kurira, tafaga reraha, and navegenien ikinan,* both Turner and Nisbet and Watt borrowed *ahatata*, which means 'lean against', to indicate 'believe in' or perhaps 'follow'. It is not possible to know if this metaphor existed before the missionaries arrived. Turner and Nisbet in several Question/Answers used *naukureian* (nominalized *akure,* sit) for a person's status after the last judgment:

IX.8. *Neremama pam ilaha hamaukure ia naukureian litiā ua leakum?*

'All people will sit in one seating/status, or not?'

Ilaha hamaukurukure ia naukureian karu, naukureian laumasan riti, naukureian lelaha riti.

'They will be sitting in two seatings/statuses, one good seating, one bad seating.'

This, too, may have been a pre-Christian Nafe metaphor or perhaps a translators' innovation, reflecting Biblical and creedal sittings on the right or left hand of God. Watt, instead, used *naraien* (the nominalized form of *ara*, live) to refer to condition or status, and this is the more common word today. For sinning, Turner and Nisbet used *o rikau* (do 3SG-crooked), while Watt relied on the better comprehensible *o tafaga reraha* (do bad behavior).

Turner and Nisbet harvested Nafe number words for their spelling book, and they grasped the language's base-five system wherein 'six' is *kɨrirum kwatia* (or *kɨrirum riti,* five one), using that number in a question about creation:

III.2. *Nepen keva Iehova in no pam nari pam?*
'How many days Jehovah made everything?'
Napen crirum riti.
'Six days.'

The LMS catechism also featured the number *iuanu miuanu*, a now archaic term for 'twenty' which signifies no more fingers or toes left to count. Question VIII.9 asked:

Iesu in rarer ia nupug in ramara tui ia narup ua rakako?
'Iesu stood up in the cave he stayed a long time below [on earth] or not?'
In mamara napen liuanu miuanu…
'He stayed 20 days…'

I am unclear why the translators did not try for the canonical 40 days unless the following words attempt this: *Iesu i ruma femenen aremama riti miuan pam, Iesu in mamara ia nepenu romnhu, mouita ia neai. Ruma femenen* is obscure, and I only partly understand this phrase as 'Iesu lived there [?] a person is entirely missing, Iesu stayed that time, then rose up to the sky'.

Watt, three decades later, in his catechism instead transliterated English terms for numbers greater than five, notably *siks* and *seven* in a question about creation, suggesting that Bislama knowledge was by then more common. He also used *bred* and *nese vain* (fluid of the vine) in questions about the Last Supper. He innovated *nakalasia,* from ecclesia, a version of the New Testament Greek term for the faithful, and also *napostelome,* with an initial *n* that marks the plural on some Nafe nouns. He did the same with *nagelo*, 'angel'. Watt also innovated *nabaptisoien*, from 'baptism', using the Nafe nominalizing circumfix '*n…ien'*.

8 Catechismal Doctrine

Watt's catechism offered clearer instruction in basic Christian doctrine, including the creation, original sin, Christ's redemption, and the last judgment. Turner and Nisbet's accompanying 1845 text *Kaukukua Kamauseni nankeriani* provided supplemental information on Iehova, Iesu, the Holy Spirit, heaven and hell, and why people should not pray to their ancestors (London Missionary Society 1845b). Watt, too, during his years on Tanna printed Nafe versions of the commandments, summary biographies of Biblical figures, the Lord's and other sample prayers, and a version of the Nicene Creed. Converts could learn doctrine from these texts and in schools that both missions established (although Turner and Nisbet's were short-lived and poorly attended). The catechisms, among these texts, provided the primary vehicle for teaching the fundamentals of Christianity.

Islanders could better grasp Christian essentials in Watt's more detailed catechism. For example, this explained the Last Supper's bread and wine as "marks" or symbols of Jesus' body and blood (Nakalasia section):

10. *Bred mene nese vain krauo nemtatien ia nafe ia navegenien ikinan?*
'Bread and fluid of the vine they two are marks of what in the tapu meal?'
Bred ro nemtatien ia nuprai Iesu, nese vain ro nemtatien ia neten.
'Bread is a mark of the body of Jesus, fluid of the vine is a mark of his blood.'

Watt's catechism more positively listed *Tafaga Amasan* (good behavior) that people should emulate while Turner and Nisbet included two sections about bad behavior *Tafaga Lelaha*, Adam and Eve's original sin, and contemporary transgressions. The LMS catechism did not list specific Tannese sins that the missionaries elsewhere deplored, including polygyny, murder, warfare, and the like. Instead, it more simply explained that Iehova is angry with everyone because of our bad hearts (or, rather, innards), and because we reject his word:

V.2. *Iehova in roniamaha tu aremama te nagasi?* [or *Iehova in ro niemaha ti iermama ti nahag si?*]
Jehovah is angry with people because of what?'
Nari lelaha repuk ia rere taha, sera lelaha anan sa ketaha tafaga Iehova in roniamaha tukwe.
[*Nari reraha ripuk ia reretaha, sa ra reraha anan saketaha tafaga Iehova in ro niemaha tukwe*].
'Many bad things in our hearts, that makes really bad our behavior Jehovah is angry from it.'
V.3. *Mahua sa ketaha tafaga lelaha?* [*Mahua saketaha tafaga reraha?*]
'What is our bad behavior?'
Ketaha sapa nankerian fei Iehova, in romhinu in tafaga lelaha tuku taha [K*etaha sapwah nagkiarien sai Iehova, in ro mui*[?] *tafaga reraha tu ketaha*].
'We reject Jehovah's words, it is also bad behavior to us.'

Watt's "Good Behavior" section, in counterpoint, set forth conduct that one should avoid, including not to pray to other spirits, lie, or fool people. He summarized some of the Ten Commandment to discourage specific island practices he hoped to prohibit:

2. *Atua terahua iraha hamafwaki em nari aba reti?*
'What will Atua do to those who are praying to something else?'
In Tererkepen iraha ia nap asori.
'He will toss them into the big fire.'
Nari ikinan nagkierien reraha pam, wa rekam?
'All bad talk is a tapu [i.e., forbidden] thing, or not?'
Ooh, Atua renise nagkierien reraha pam, neikueien, mene navsieteien ierama, mene nagkierien rikauikau.
'Yes, Atua forbids all bad talk, lying, and fooling people, and crooked talk.'

This section also proscribed sabbath work (gardening, reef gathering, plaiting coconut leaves, weaving baskets, styling hair) to keep it holy. We should, instead, read and preach Atua's word, sing songs, and gather to pray to him. We should also pray before we eat. Children should respect their fathers and mothers. Stealing is bad, as is bashing people. Watt, here again, incorporated a specific bad Tanna practice—clubbing someone—into his version of the commandment not to murder:

12. *Nari ikinan nauwasien ierama, wa rekam?*

'Assaulting people is forbidden, or not?'

Ooh, nari ikinan nahmakuien mene nauwasien ierama.

'Yes, clubbing and assaulting people is forbidden.'

Watt's catechism also forbade "calling" to women and all similar behavior (i.e., adultery). Question 14 proscribed polygyny (although only two wives, not more, were prohibited):

14. *Nari ikinan te ieruman reti teravahi sumun bran karu, wa rekam?*

'Is one man taking together two women forbidden, or not?'

Additional Q and As outlawed divorce, coveting others' possessions, and either looking at or hearing bad things and bad talk. Instead, we should help others and teach them and our children about Atua, Iesu Kristo, and good behavior, leading them to attend church on the holy day.

9 Dialect and Language Shift

The two catechisms offer a few clues about lexical differences between the Nafe spoken around the mission at Port Resolution and that at Watt's original Kwamera post. The two stations are about twelve miles distant overland. Nafe today comprises a number of microdialects. A few common words differ from village to village, and they serve to identify speakers with that place (Lindstrom, 1983). The catechisms included several such terms, although one needs to keep in mind the limited competence of Turner and Nisbet and their Polynesian teachers (Table 4).

Table 4. Dialectical variants

	TURNER/NISBET	WATT
no/not	Rakako	Rekam
What	Nagasi	Nafe
Come	Ufe	Uvehe
towards (desc. adjunct)	Fe	Pehe
language/word	Nankerian	Nagkierien

Turner and Nisbet also used *leakum* alongside *rakako. Rakako* is now archaic, although other microdialect terms for 'no' remain common (e.g., *nɨkam*). *Nagasi* derives from *nahag si* ('whose name'). This today is less common than *nafe*. People around Port Resolution, however, continue to use the word, along with *ufe*

Aside from Christian transliterations, neither catechism included obvious Bislama terms. South Seas pidgins and jargons were just beginning to spread by the 1840s, and the LMS missionaries probably had only passing knowledge of these (Crowley 1990: 58-65). By the 1870s, however, many Tannese would have learned some early Bislama (or Beach-La-Mar) terms. Watt's catechism featured a few transliterated English, or early Bislama, words (*siks, seven, bred*) that he presumed islanders would grasp. His translation of the tenth commandment (Presbyterian Mission 1941, p. 15) featured two early Beach-La-Mar words,

kurimatau (Watt's or Tanna's version of *bulumakao,* 'cattle', which swapped *bulu* with Nafe *kuri* 'dog'[4]), and *dogke* (donkey):

> *Reram terapa nerahaien te nimwa savei piam . . . wa kurimatau savani, wa dogke savani, wa nari reti savei piam.*
> Your heart/innards will have no evilness to your brother's house . . . or his cattle, or his donkey, or anything belonging to your brother.

Turner and Nisbet's syntax is in places opaque, but a Nafe speaker today could discern the meaning of most of the catechism's words. I am unable to define, however, one perhaps archaic word—*buaf(u)*—that appeared in three Questions and Answers. Context doesn't help, although a possible meaning is 'downwards, below' (today *pirapw*):

> I.10. *Iehova in i buaf ua leakum?*
> 'Is Iehova [?] or not?'
> *In ia neai mene, ia narup mene, ia tarhe tana pam.*
> 'He is in the skies, and places beneath, and in all lands.'

> VI.8. *In [Iesu] tai numuruian ua leakum?*
> 'Is he redemption of life or not?'
> *In tain numuruian. Tui Iehova in ramarife Iesu i buafu—Iesu in ramafe i buafu, in vahi mife nupuran me nanumun mo tain numurian sa ketaha.*
> 'He is redemption of life. Long ago, Iehova sent Iesu to [?]—Iesu came to [?], he came taking his body and his spirit to redeem our lives.'

> VII.6. *Iesu in ramo nari i buafu ua rekam?*
> 'Iesu does things at [?] or not?'
> *Iesu in mahatan i pam aremama i nankerian fei Iehova, in vahi ruka nemheian aremama ilaha repuk hamru pam.*
> 'Iesu shows/teaches everything to people of Jehovah's word, he already removed evilness [from] people, they many all live.'

Tannese auditors or readers would have appreciated the two catechisms' expressed mobility: the goings and comings of Iesu, people's eventual translation up to the sky or down into the fire, Iehova's looking at and listening towards us, and so on. This resonated with Nafe's set of descriptive adjuncts and locative nouns, including *pirapw* and *inherip* (Table 5).

[4] *Kurimatau* also appears as an illustration caption in the *Maresian* catechism printed in Rarotonga in 1851. The word was a Samoan variant that teachers brought to Tanna (Paul Geraghty, personal communication), with *kuri* (dog).

Table 5. Locatives and movement adjuncts

Towards speaker/hearer	Pehe
Away from speaker/hearer	Pen
Inland	Pare
Seaward	Peraha
Clockwise around the island	Pesu
Counterclockwise around the island	Prɨhi
Upwards	Puta
Downwards	Pirapw
Above	Irenha
Below	Inherip

Translators incorporated versions of these lexemes in the two catechisms, as in Turner and Nisbet's question I.10 above, and Watt's seventh Nanumun Ikinan question:

7. *Safo ira, ma Nanumun Ikinan ramara ia reretaha?*

'What do we do, that the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts/innards?'

Repenwa savahipen reretaha em Iehova, In teraveipehe Nanumun Ikinan em ketaha.

Glossed, this is:

R-ip-n-ua	*s-avahi-pen*	*reri-taha*	*mɨ*	*Iehova,*
3S-COND-PFV-say	1PL-give-away.LOC	innards-3PL.POSS	to	Jehovah,

In	*t-r-uve-pehe*	*Nanunu-n*	*Ikinan*	*mɨ*	*ketaha.*
he	FUT-3SG-give-towards.LOC	Spirit-3SG.POSS	tapu	to	us.PL.INCL.

'Should we give (away) our hearts/innards to Iehova, He will send (towards) the Holy Spirit to us.'

10 One Last Question

Printed in 1845 and 1876, the two catechisms remain intelligible (although Turner and Nisbet's verbal morphology and syntax are frequently muddy), but can and do people on Tanna read these catechisms today? They could if they could locate copies. A few catechistic terms, like *ahua* (why, how), if archaic, are still understood. Nafe since 1845 has shifted given Bislama's influence, but language transformation has not been such to render these 19th century texts unintelligible.

Copies of Turner and Nisbet's LMS catechism disappeared from Tanna shortly after its printing, existing today only in the Australian National Library and a few other archives. Watt's catechism fared better, at least during the 20th century. The Presbyterian Mission collected translations of hymns in Tanna's three mission languages (Kwamera/Nafe, White Sands/Narak, and Lenakel/Netvaar) and published these along with attendant Christian texts including Watt's Nafe catechism. The Mission and then the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu reprinted this book several times, mostly recently in 1978 two years before Vanuatu's independence. Few copies of this most recent reprint, however, have survived. Books and printed matter on Tanna decay far more quickly than does language. A Presbyterian pastor friend confirmed that he and his colleagues have lost their copies, even the 1970s reprint, as these books have moldered and rotted.

These two 19th century Nafe catechisms were among the first language texts created for Tannese students and novices, but their chancy persistence reminds us of the necessity to constantly maintain a stock of language material. Vanuatu's challenging climate obliges regular publication of printed texts, or perhaps instead making these available online, to keep these readable and in circulation.

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